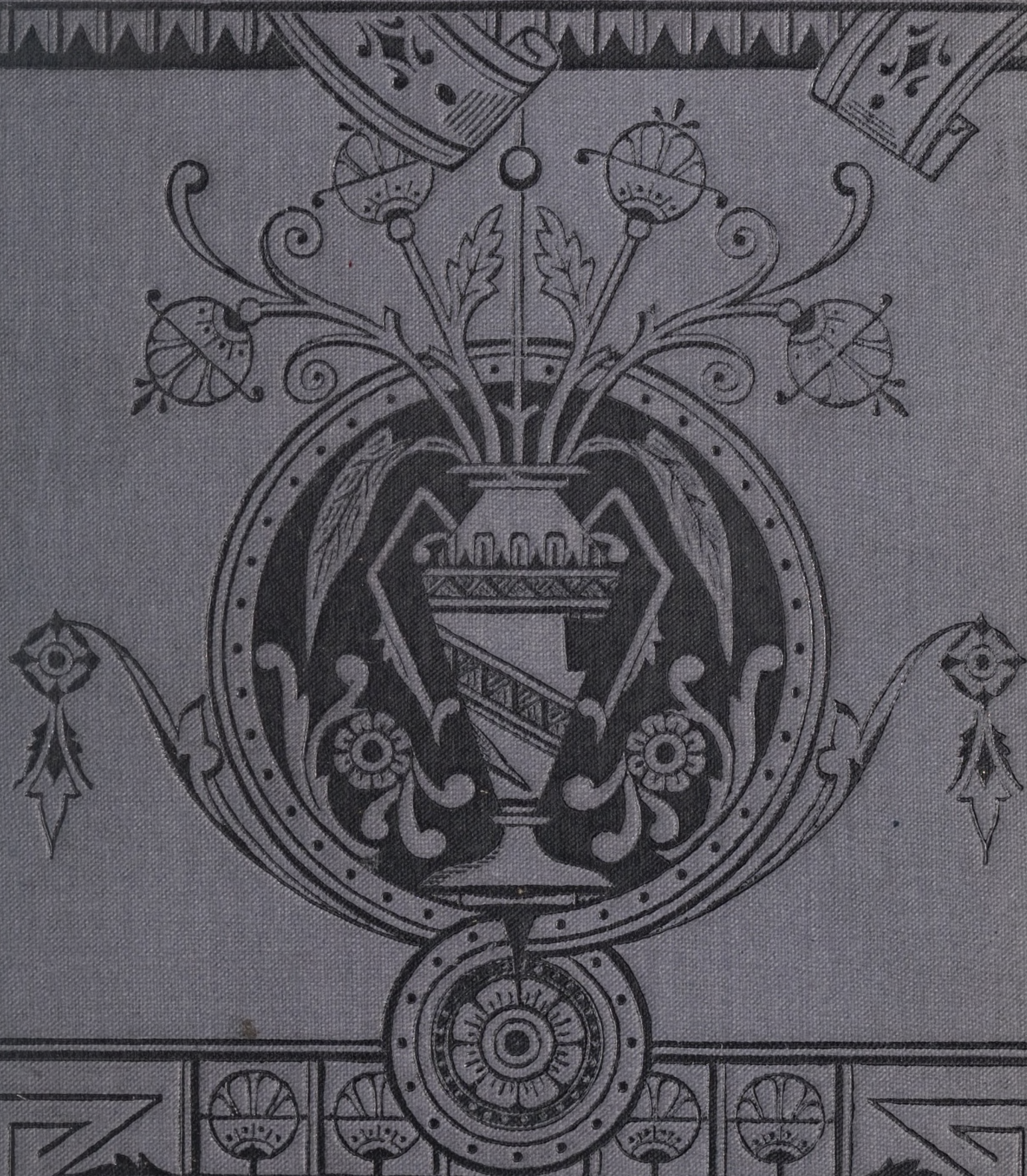




CONSCIENCE'S TALES



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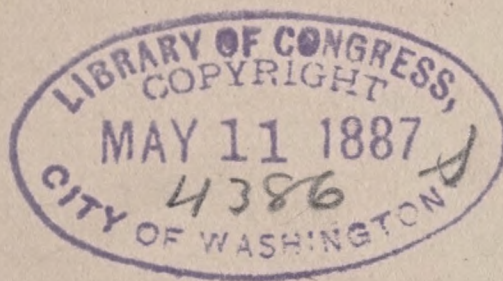
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE IRON TOMB.

BY
HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

Translated from the Original Flemish.



BALTIMORE:
JOHN MURPHY & CO.
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PROLOGUE.

THE village school has been dismissed.

There goes Micken, the fair, pretty child, returning home with her slate beneath her arm. Her neighbor Janneken, whose head is covered with thick, curling hair, walks beside her.¹

While rambling along they cull the corn flowers and red poppies growing in the rye; then seat themselves upon a moss-grown stone at the entrance of the cemetery.

Janneken weaves a wreath with the flowers, but the little girl thinks that takes too long, and shows great impatience to become possessed of it.

But Janneken works away with great earnestness, without comprehending the reason which impels him to do so. He arranges and disposes of the flowers with an eye to the harmony of color, now and then trying the wreath on his pretty companion's brow.

Is it the awakening of friendship or of love that has converted the child into a precocious artist?

Back of these innocent friends extends the city of eternal rest, with its silence that nothing can break, its grass-grown tombs and broken crosses.

¹ Micken, Janneken, are little Mary, little John.

The modest little church rises above the graveyard. Its old tower, both heavy and massive at the base, resembles an aged man weeping for his children that are no more. Gradually it becomes lighter in form, points towards the sky like a needle, showing the golden star of hope beaming above the generations sleeping peacefully within the bosom of the earth.

The sun diffuses its cheerful light around the graveyard, the flowers wave upon the tombs with the breath of the south wind, the birds sing in the lindens that shade the hallowed ground, gaudy butterflies flutter above the little wooden crosses, but nothing disturbs the solemn silence or the sacred solitude of the garden of the dead.

Janneken has finished his work; on Micken's brow blooms the red and white wreath he has woven for her.

They both take the path that winds across the cemetery.

Janneken sees a white field daisy shining like a silver star upon a grave; he springs aside, plucks the flower from its stem, and places it on the brow of his friend.

It is the most precious jewel in the diadem of a queen—a queen whose budding royalty is life, whose sceptre is beauty, and whose treasures are faith and truth.

Micken walks along full of happiness, her blue eyes glisten with childish pride and blend their sweet radiance with that of the blue corn-flowers waving on her brow.

But she pauses and glances with a smile at a little wooden cross, upon which the fresh garland of flowers indicates a newly-made grave.

"The wreath you wear is much more beautiful," says Janneken.

"The wheelwright's little Lotte is buried there," said the little girl, dreamily.

"Poor little girl!" answers the boy, "She can never go to school with us any more."

"But she is in Heaven, isn't she?"

"Yes, she is in Heaven, poor girl!"

"Why are you sad because little Lotte is in Heaven?" asked Micken, astonished. "She is so well off in Heaven. You can walk about there from morning until night with the pretty little angels and get an apron full of good things—all days are Sundays—and when you are tired of playing the good God takes you on his knee, kisses you, and puts you to sleep."

"Yes, yes, it must be very nice in Heaven," sighed Janneken, absorbed in his own thoughts.

"I saw Lotte when she had already become a little angel and was sleeping a long sleep before going to Heaven," continued Micken. "Oh! how beautiful she was. She had on a lovely white dress, and her face and hands were still whiter than the dress. She wore on her head a gold and silver crown with little stars and pearls like the Infant Jesus in the Church,¹ and Lotte smiled so sweetly

¹ In some parts of Belgium it is the custom to adorn dead children with wreaths of artificial flowers.

in her sleep, one might suppose she was already dreaming of Heaven. I did not see her wings, but my mother told me they were folded under her shoulders to get rest for the long journey. . . For Heaven is very far, very far from here, Janneken."

"Come, Micken," muttered the boy, pulling her away from the little grave, "I should not like to die all the same, because I would no longer be able to play with you."

"But if we could go to Heaven together that would be as well, wouldn't it?"

"No, no, don't speak of that any more," replied Janneken sadly; "it makes me sorry. Ah! Micken, are you not satisfied with earth?"

They were approaching the other side of the church.

Against the wall is a little enclosure surrounded by an iron grating to protect a grave within from the feet of the passers by; the grating contains a door with a lock, and two steps off is a bench made of oak wood, the surface of which has become polished with long use.

In the enclosure no stone is inscribed with the name of the cherished dead, but the ground is covered with beautiful flowers. It is plain to be seen that a pious hand tends and watches them, for while in other portions of the cemetery the grass is half burnt with the heat of summer, the flowers here show wonderful freshness and vitality.

"See!" said the little girl, "there are more fresh flowers on the iron tomb, flowers that have grown

out of the earth, and blossomed in a single night—that's strange, isn't it? Flowers that are not found anywhere else, neither in the meadows nor the fields, nor in the woods!"

"Oh! simple Micken, it is the hermit who plants them there."

"Yes, then what is the use of that worn out bench? It is the white lady who comes every night, and sits upon it, near the iron tomb, until the cock crows."

"No, it is the old hermit who comes every day to pray upon the bench."

"But who is buried there, Janneken? My mother does'nt know."

"I asked my father about it. The story is a dreadful one, that I cannot understand. I believe the hermit was married to a woman already—dead—"

"Look, Janneken, what a pretty flower!" interrupted the little girl admiringly, "with yellow leaves like gold and a cup as red as blood."

The little boy looked around defiantly, then said.

"I should like to gather that flower to add to your wreath, Micken, but am afraid the hermit may see me."

"No, no, don't pick it," said the child, frightened, "the white lady would know it."

But Janneken bent across the iron grating and stretched out his full length to gather the beautiful flower.

"Fly, there comes the hermit!" cried Micken.

And the two children ran terrified out of the cemetery.

THE IRON TOMB.

CHAPTER I.

ON a beautiful summer's day I was walking along, staff in hand, upon one of those broad roads that lead from Antwerp to the country. I was tired with musing and contemplating nature, for the long walk had wearied my limbs, and the stifling heat deadened my sensibilities.

It was not that I had made so long a journey or hastened my steps so much as to exhaust my strength. I had left the city early in the morning, had walked and seated myself by turns on the side of the road, had talked with the people who kept the inn, had gathered herbs and passed over flowers, and thus dreaming, sauntering and enjoying with infantile pleasure, had only made nine miles of the way when the sun attained its meridian height.

It was with true pleasure that I heard the distant sound of wheels behind me, and that I distinguished, in a cloud of dust, the huge black mass that announced the arrival of the stage coach.

When the heavy carriage finally approached the spot where I found myself, I made a sign to the

conductor who from afar had already sent me a friendly salute, as to an old acquaintance.

He stopped his horses, opened the door of the coach, and replied to my telegraphic message.

"There is still one place left in the coupe. Where are we going in this stifling weather?"

"Put me down on the road to Bordeghem."

"Very well sir; let's be off!"

I jumped into the diligence, and before I was seated the horses had recovered their jog trot.

There was only one passenger in the coach, an old gentleman with gray hair, who had responded to my salute with a "Good morning, sir," uttered in a low tone, almost without observing me, who seemed little inclined to converse.

For a time I looked out of the window, contemplating in an absent-minded manner the trees filing off one after the other as the diligence went along.

But soon an impulse of curiosity directed my attention to my traveling companion; and, as he held his head and eyes down, I could look at and watch him at leisure.

There was nothing remarkable about him. He seemed to be over sixty; his hair was as white as silver, and his back appeared to me slightly bent. His features were refined, and bore the traces of faded beauty. His apparel, which was simple though rich, was that of a man belonging to the respectable middle classes. The fixity of his widely opened eyes, a smile that at times played about his mouth, and the thoughtful wrinkle above his brow,

indicated that at this moment he was preoccupied with some absorbing thought.

What most attracted my attention was a small block of alabaster placed beside him on the seat. As this object, which was still in the rough, resembled the pedestal of a clock, and as I saw three or four steel instruments of a peculiar shape obtruding from a paper placed near the block of alabaster, I thought I was not mistaken in coming to the conclusion that my traveling companion must be a clockmaker.

After a long silence I ventured this commonplace remark.

"It is very warm to-day, isn't it sir?"

He started as if awakened from a dream, looked towards me, and replied with a pleasant smile,

"It is indeed very warm, sir."

Then he again turned away his eyes and resumed his original position.

I felt no desire to become better acquainted with a man who was so chary of his words and so little given to conversation. Moreover, his face, which I had just caught an entire glimpse of, inspired me with a degree of respect, on account of the dignity imprinted upon his features, which were impressed with genius and sentiment.

I sunk into a corner of the diligence, closed my eyes, and I reflected so long and well that I finally lost consciousness.

"Passengers for Bordeghem," cried the conductor, opening the door.

I jumped out on the road and paid my fare.

The driver re-mounted, whipped up his horses, and cried out in token of farewell, "A pleasant trip, Mr. Conscience, and do not relate too many fables of the Iron Tomb."

Quite astonished, I followed the conductor with my eyes. Who could have betrayed the motive for my trip, since the whole way along I had never spoken a word to any one?

A voice behind me calling my name made me turn my head.

I saw my strange companion of the diligence approaching me, hat in hand, a smile on his lips and his block of alabaster under his arm. He had probably alighted just after me without my noticing it.

He saluted me cordially, and said: "You are Mr. Conscience, the poet of our humble country neighborhood? Excuse my troubling you, but I should like to shake you by the hand—I have so long wished to see you"

I stammered some words thanking the good old man for his kindness.

"And you are going to Bordeghem?" he asked.

"Yes; but I shall not remain long; I expect to be at Benkelhout before the evening, and will spend the night there."

"I shall at least have the pleasure of being your companion on the way, and perhaps, your guide as far as Bordeghem—for you have never yet been in our little forgotten village?"

"No, sir, never yet; and I shall avail myself of

your kindness with pleasure, on condition that you will let me carry that stone."

"Don't think of it; my hair is white and my back is beginning to bend, but the legs and heart are still in good condition."

I insisted upon carrying the stone, speaking of his advanced age, my younger powers, and the respect due to age, but he excused himself and held on with determination; but finally I took his burden from him almost forcibly, and thus compelled him to follow me along the sandy road.

To put an end to his expressed regrets, I said to him:

"That block of alabaster is intended no doubt for the base of a clock. The gentleman is probably a clockmaker?"

"Clockmaker!" he replied, laughing. "No, I am a sculptor."

"Indeed! am I then in the society of an artist? I am most happy."

"An amateur, sir."

"And have you lived long at Bordeghem?"

"For at least forty years."

"Perhaps your name is not unknown to me." The old man shook his head, and after a moment's pause replied,

"You are still too young, sir, to know my name. I do not mean that in the world of art some little fame was not attached to that name, but this did not last long. More than thirty years have gone by since that was the case."

“Did you never exhibit any of your works?” I asked.

“Once only—it was in 1824. There was a great stir in the domain of art, for peace gave an impulse to all the living forces of the nation. Unfortunately every one was bound by those narrow rules that the so-called school of David had marked out as a condition of beauty. They endeavored in everything to imitate the ancient Greek models, but had only borrowed from them the outward and material forms, and for lack of a soul that could give life to the creations of the new school, they had had recourse to theatrical poses and exaggerated action. All figures, either painted or sculptured, which were not stiff and devoid of soul, could find no favor in the eyes of a public whose taste was perverted. It was under these circumstances that I exhibited my first work. The statue—a recumbent one in marble—was that of a young girl lying on her death-bed, still holding in her clasped hands the crucifix, when death overtook her. I had irradiated the inanimate face of my statue with a joyous smile, an expression of confidence, of hope and of happiness. I wished to impress upon the marble the moment when the soul was quitting the body, yet was imbued with a sense of certainty in a better life. This work, to which I gave the name of ‘A Presentiment of Eternity,’ created a sort of uprising among the artists. The larger number attacked me with great fury, and criticised my statue as the work of a diseased imagination,

and as a heresy against the rules then in vogue. And indeed the lines of my statue were spare, delicate, slight and pensive; the material form was sacrificed to the moral expression of an idea or sentiment. There were also many who admired my work and encouraged me by saying I was destined to revolutionize the school of art and elevate the Christian above the Pagan expression of it; but in proportion to the number who took up my defense, my rabid enemies increased. If the struggle had been limited to the discussion of the defects and merits of my statue, I should not have succumbed; but my adversaries, blinded by passion, sought to find motives in my past life to hold me up to public ridicule. Without intending it they made my heart bleed, deeply wounded and profaned memories that were dearer than life. Since then, I have feared publicity, and exhibited nothing more."

There were in the old man's words a touching calmness and affecting serenity. At this moment he presented such an appearance of noble majesty that I was deeply moved, and it was only after a moment's silence that I said to him,

"And do you never work any more now?"

"Occasionally I do," he said, "it would be impossible for me to desist, even did I wish it; art has become an imperious necessity, because it is the magic wand with which I wake the happy thoughts of my past life and transport myself to the spring-time of existence."

The road had become very sandy, and we found

some trouble in walking along. This interrupted our conversation for some moments. When I was able to resume my place beside the old man, I asked him,

“If I am not mistaken, you have read some of my works—are you then fond of books?”

“I do not read much,” he said, “yet I possess the most of your works.”

“And they have succeeded in pleasing you?”

“Your stories of the country, and especially your moral tales—yes, better than you might suppose. Some I have read as many as ten times; after several readings it is not so much the stories that give me pleasure, it is the tone—a sort of secret harmony which accords with my nature and delights me.”

I gazed at the old man with a look of interrogation that he might more fully explain himself.

“In the stories I speak of,” he said, “there is an innocent simplicity, a sweet sensibility and undying hope, a sincere sentiment of admiration for nature and love of humanity. In reading them I have often been deeply touched, but they never tire me; and when I put them down I feel consoled, have more faith and more love, and I rejoice to find that the pure and tender chords which seem only appropriate to childhood still vibrate in my soul.”

I stammered forth some words, and endeavored to make the old man admit that he was praising my works more than they deserved, probably through kindness and sympathy, but he rejected the idea and resumed in conclusion,

"It is true that each man thinks in a manner peculiar to himself as to that he holds within him, but it is owing to some feeling that belonged to his early life, or the events that colored that life. I therefore know that all do not necessarily think as I do. Let this be as it may, had I only found in your works the religion of memory, and the faith in a better life, these would have sufficed to make me love them. There are besides other reasons, that I cannot tell you."

We were just then nearing two or three peasants on the road who were coming towards us. We kept silence until they passed on. Then the old man asked me,

"Will you only go through Bordeghem and spend the night at Benkelhout? Then you have no particular object in visiting our little village?"

"Yes, I have; I had intended as I went along to obtain some information upon a matter that was related to me; but since you are so good and obliging, why should I not ask you about what I want to know? In the cemetery at Bordeghem is there not an iron tomb?"

"There is indeed a tomb which the simple villagers call the iron tomb, because it is surrounded by a grating; but the tomb itself is not remarkable."

The old man's voice seemed suddenly to have undergone a change; it was reserved and dry, as if he wished to stop or shorten the conversation.

"Are there not always fresh flowers growing about the tomb?" I asked.

"Flowers grow there always," he replied.

"And there is a wooden bench near the tomb, and the bench is worn, because a spirit, a white lady, has for many years sat there every night?"

"Children's tales," said the old man, with a smile on his lips.

"I know very well, sir, it can only be a tale, but there is some one who takes care of the flowers on the tomb. For it must also be a fable that these flowers spring from the earth of themselves."

As my companion did not immediately reply to my question, I said to him,

"Several days ago a peasant woman from this neighborhood came to ask my advice about obtaining the pardon of her son, upon whom a large fine had been imposed for poaching. I made her talk. It is in this manner I learned all the details that belong to a peasant's life. She spoke to me of the iron tomb, of the flowers which are ever renewed, of the white lady, and of a hermit who remains in prayer beside the tomb for days together. Be good enough to tell me what there is of truth in the peasant's story."

"The matter is very simple," replied my companion. "The man whom they call the hermit, because he lives alone, takes care of and ornaments the tomb of one who was dearer to him than the light of his eyes. In living thus, since the fatal separation, near the tomb, and in concentrating all his affection upon it, he triumphs over death itself. For who can say that the spouse whom the tomb

sought to ravish from him is really gone, when he beholds her every moment, and she lives again a hundred times a day in his thoughts?"

I looked at the old man in astonishment: his eyes glistened with a strange lustre, and his face beamed with enthusiasm.

He observed the impression his words had made upon me, and overcame his emotion. He pointed with his finger to the road, and said in a calmer tone:

"There is our little church. Had we taken the cross road we should already have been able to see from afar the iron tomb."

I scarcely paid attention to what he pointed out, and asked dreamily:

"A bride, did you say, sir? Then it is a married woman who rests beneath the iron tomb?"

"A virgin as pure as the lilies before they fade," he muttered.

"But married?"

"In truth, a virgin and a wife."

I did not know what to think of the solemn tone in which the old man pronounced these words. I began to feel under the influence of a strange emotion. I fancied that the iron tomb must conceal a touching story, and my curiosity was excited to the greatest degree.

The old man must most assuredly have guessed that I was going to press the subject further. He took the block of alabaster from me before I had fathomed his intention, and when I endeavored to

continue to carry the burden, he said that at least in the village he would have to refuse my assistance, and escaped from the questions I was about to put to him, much to my disappointment, by walking to the entrance of the cemetery, saying :

“Come, I will show you the iron tomb. See, over there near the church wall, those flowers behind the grating—that is the iron tomb.”

I approached the spot indicated, and looked with astonishment into the small enclosure. I sought in vain for a stone or any other indication that could give me the name of the dead who was so sorrowed for. Nothing but flowers, but such beautiful flowers, and such rare ones, selected with so great a sentiment as to the form and color, that it was only a lover's hand that could attain such a degree of harmony. For myself it seemed beyond truth that the hermit—if really a hermit, who watched over the tomb—must be young, and still imbued with the sweet illusions of life. But when I looked at the wooden bench worn with use, I began to recover from this impression.

“How long has that bench been there?” I asked the old man.

“For forty years.”

“It must be the hermit who has worn it so, by sitting down or kneeling in prayer upon it?”

“It is the hermit,” my guide replied.

“But this seems beyond human power,” I exclaimed in admiration. “To sit during forty years near a grave! If this be love, what a profound, all-

absorbing, infinite sentiment ! The sacrifice, the devotion, the fusion of one soul that inhabits earth with another which is in heaven ! This might be called idolatry, if this aspiration towards heaven did not attest strong faith in the divine bounty, and a hope of future happiness without end. To live for the dead and with the dead ! ”

“ She is not dead,” murmured the old man.

“ Not dead ? ” I repeated. “ What mystery, what prodigy do these flowers hide ? ”

“ Do you assume not to understand me, sir,” said the old man in a calm and deep tone, “ when your heart has however so well understood me ? Dead ? Why while I am speaking to you I seem to see her ; she smiles, I hear her voice, she cries out to me from the midst of these flowers ‘ The time is becoming shorter—I wait, I wait. ’ ”

“ She awaits you ! ” I exclaimed stupefied. “ Is it then you who have worn away this wooden bench ? ”

“ No other than myself.”

“ The hermit ? ”—

“ Is the old man whom chance gave you as a guide, the sculptor for whom you carried the alabaster, without knowing what sacred memory he would engrave upon it. But come with me : ask me nothing more. Over there behind the cemetery wall is my home. Follow me : I will tell you things that none other has known so well as you will know them.”

I allowed myself to be conducted from the cemetery. As we walked along, the old man resumed :

“Since that iron tomb was placed there, I have never opened my heart to any one. I love you, because in your writings I found you capable of understanding a life that others call a long folly. My existence here below is drawing to a close, a secret presentiment assures me I shall see her soon other than in my dreams. Accept the confidence I am about to place in you of what I have hoped and suffered, and when I sleep beside her in the little tomb, then narrate my humble and sad life, if you think it worthy of being written.”

He stepped behind the cemetery wall and rung at the door of a house whose front was white, the windows being closed with green shutters. An aged servant opened the door; as we entered, the old man said :

“Katherine, here is a friend who will dine with me. Set two places at the table.”

The servant went off without replying. I wished to apologize for the trouble I was giving him and his old servant, but he took me by the hand and conducted me to the end of the house, into a large room, which received light from an immense garden filled with flowers. The appearance of the room astonished me. I seemed to have been transported by magic into the study room of the Academy at Antwerp, for it contained many objects that I had more than once held in my hands, or whose counterparts I had seen a hundred times.

“Cast a rapid glance upon these objects,” said the old man to me; “they all play a more or less

important part in the story I am about to relate to you; but do not now ask for an explanation of them. It would be time lost, and compel me to wearisome repetition."

Yet I had never seen what my host first pointed out to me, and I could perceive no meaning in them. On a table were all sorts of shapeless figures of dogs, cows, birds, horses, and other animals, very roughly fashioned with a knife in white wood. On a piece of blue velvet were spread several rather unusual figures, beside one of those opal boxes which women use to contain mint lozenges or lemon drops. There was also a knife with a mother-of-pearl handle, and several gold and silver medals with faded ribbons.

While making the circuit of the room I saw in succession on the walls all the usual *studies* used by the young scholars of the Academy at Antwerp; Noses, ears, hands, heads, then entire figures. Further on these were all reproduced in dried clay, and then again in plaster.

I only saw one original composition at the end of the room. The artist no doubt attached a great price to it, for he had enclosed it in a glass wardrobe to protect it from dust and dampness. It was a group in plaster, representing a young woman who is placing her left hand on the head of a child, while the other which is extended forward seems to point out to that child the road beyond. In the protecting smile of the woman and the grateful expression of the child's features, there was a sentiment

so deep and mysterious that I was touched and fell into a revery.

After observing this strange work some little time in silence, I said to my host,

“That statue is not a work of imagination, nor is it fashioned after classical rules: nature alone was the artist’s model. Am I not right, sir?—that woman has lived.”

“She has lived,” repeated the old man, with a sigh whose strange depth surprised me.

“What?” I exclaimed “do I see the image of the woman who lies”—

“Who lies beneath the iron tomb. She was then beautiful—as beautiful as the never-dying dream of poets.”

I was silent, fearing to sadden the old man by my indiscreet questions.

He went to the end of the room, opened a large door, and said:

“Up to this time we have only seen the pupil’s studies, memories that contain my entire life. Enter—you may now judge of the artist. It would be a real joy for him if his works could insure your approbation, or at least evoke your interest.”

The room which we entered was lighted from above; along the length of the walls on wooden pedestals stood a large number of marble and alabaster statues, the first glance at which struck me with admiration.

All these works were evidently the expression of one only thought, reproduced under different

forms. There were none that did not speak of death and the resurrection to a better life. Now it was the angel of death with spread wings carrying a young sleeping girl to her celestial home; then it would be the genius of immortality opening the tomb, and showing to the awakened soul the road to light. Again it would be that same young girl leaning partly forth from the tomb and holding out her hands imploringly, as if she were calling some one; another represented a young boy kneeling on a grave stone embracing the symbolic anchor; yet another was Phoenix arising with new strength from his own ashes—it was, in short, many figures representing in a thrilling manner the idea of a future state after death.

All these compositions breathed the deep sincerity of the author's feeling, and seemed to live not so much by their corporeal forms, but through something elevated, an imprint of the soul that the artist had impressed upon them, which emanated from himself. The forms of the statues were indeed slender and spare, but there was a unity in these creations, the expression of so perfect a thought, and such harmonious proportion, so true to nature and yet so poetical, that when I gazed upon them I felt myself transported to a world of mysticism and almost superhuman thought.

“How beautiful this all is!” I exclaimed, with enthusiasm. “Sir, you should no longer hide these works of art. Enrich with an illustrious name the golden book of your country—add a brilliant ornament to its artistic crown!”

He smiled at my exclamation: the favorable impression produced upon me by his genius seemed to give him pleasure, but in his look there was biting sarcasm, as if taxing me with exaggeration.

"I tell the truth, believe me," I continued; "exhibit your works, and a cry of admiration will go up from the crowd of artists. If they were deluded in the past by the exclusive admiration of outward form, there is to-day a reaction towards less plastic ideas. Art is the expression of thought, sentiment, and the noblest aspirations of man. No, no, do not deprive the Flemish School of such perfect models."

The old man had bent his head down, and muttered as he spoke to himself,

"To give up my memories and every heart-beat as pasture for the multitude? To permit that ill-will shall lift the curtain of my life, and evoke a jest from what is so sacred to me?" . . .

At this moment the old servant opened the door and announced dinner.

"Come sir," said the sculptor, evidently pleased with the interruption, "the hermit's table will not offer very choice viands, but there will be enough to restore the strength of a man who, like yourself, loves country life."

We took our places at table, and ate somewhat rapidly of two or three good dishes, which I did ample justice to, the more so that the presence of the servant prevented my broaching the subject that filled my mind.

After dinner the old man conducted me into a somewhat spacious hot-house. I then knew where the exotics and rare flowers came from that grew on the iron tomb.

When we had walked through the hot-house, we entered a delightful garden enameled with a thousand charming flowers, which drew from me laughingly the expression "that many would wish to become hermits in such a hermitage."

But the old man, without replying to my jest, led me beneath an arbor covered with clematis and honeysuckle, seated himself on a bench and pointed out a place beside him, and said

"You will remain with me. Make no excuses—my story is longer than you think; if you wish to hear it all, you must submit to this necessity. It will be no trouble to me, the servant has already received orders to prepare your room. You will not sleep worse there than at the 'Eagle,' where you proposed to spend the night; it is arranged then you will be the hermit's guest. Call upon all your patience and forgive an old man, who lives but in his memories, if he lays too great stress upon particulars and childish sensations, which are important to himself alone. Having made this request, I begin my story without further preamble."

CHAPTER II.

“AT about a quarter of an hour’s distance from where we are, near a limpid stream, is situated a small farm known as the *Maison d’Eau*, surrounded by woods and prairies.

It was inhabited about fifty years ago by Master Wolvenaer, a maker of wooden shoes, known to all the city shop-keepers for the beautiful ones he shaped. His occupation obtained him, by the sweat of his brow, sufficient means to provide for the wants of quite a numerous family, for he had no fewer than six children, all under age.

“As he farmed a small piece of land, and his wife herself most frequently overlooked the work in the fields, there reigned a degree of comfort in the shoemaker’s home, or at all events comparative ease.

“Most certainly the hard-working artisan would have been altogether happy if a constant cause for sorrow had not clouded his horizon. Among his six children there was one—a boy, eleven years of age—who was remarkable for great beauty. He had black curling hair, bright brown eyes, and features of great refinement; but the poor child had not the power of speech—during the first months of his birth he had fallen headforemost from his crib, was seized with frightful convulsions, and for a long

while struggled with death. It was supposed that in the accident his tongue had become paralyzed, for though he could articulate no distinct sound, yet his hearing was excellent.

“The shoemaker was my father, and the dumb child none other than myself, who am speaking to you now.

“My father loved and pitied me with all his heart. Frequently, when I stood silently beside his bench, he would interrupt his work and gaze upon me with sadness and sorrow. Then I embraced him gratefully, and endeavored by gestures to console him for my unhappy fate; but instead of allaying his grief, my efforts more frequently reduced him to tears; for indeed, I made superhuman efforts at speaking, yet only despondent and piercing cries, inarticulate and inhuman sounds, came from my throat, which broke his heart. Then, too, like all dumb people, I was extremely sensitive, and my slightest gesture, my slightest movement to express what I thought or felt, was as violent and exaggerated as a madman's.

“My parents often wondered if the accident of which I had been the victim had not turned my brain. My brothers and sisters looked upon me as an *innocent*—that is, almost an idiot. The village children were afraid of the little innocent of the *Maison d' Eau*, and called me the ‘crazy boy.’

“Young as I was, still I felt deeply wounded at being so misunderstood by all the world. As I led our sheep to pasture I would be seated long days

alone on the borders of the prairie, and it frequently happened that I wept for many hours, as I could not speak, and the other children with whom I wished so to play laughed at and avoided me because of my infirmity. I felt the strength within me to prove I was not crazy. I thirsted for friendship, and even for consideration. I felt a sort of pride which inspired a sickly desire to distinguish myself by one or the other quality.

“ Perhaps it was because of this confused aspiration of my mind that the reason may be found for the strange work which unceasingly occupied me. I never went to the prairie without carrying in my pocket some small pieces of willow, and applied myself to carving with my knife figures of men and beasts ; and I often remained entire days absorbed in my work, with the beads standing out upon my forehead. If I succeeded according to my idea in obtaining from the wood a figure bearing more or less resemblance to what I wanted, I jumped, and danced, and laughed, as if I had gained a great victory ; but if, in spite of my efforts, nothing recognizable appeared from beneath my knife, I allowed my work to drop with discouragement, and flung about my arms with disgust and pain.

“ My father, when I showed him my wooden figures, shrugged his shoulders with sorrowful compassion. The strange vanity which I seemed to take in my rough and ridiculous efforts made him as sorrowful as if he had found reason to doubt of the lucidity of my mind.

“As to myself, it only needed that my mother should smile sometimes upon my work, that my sisters found pleasure in playing with my figures, and that neither of my two brothers, older than myself, could do as well.

“One day I had worked with great ardor from morning until the middle of the afternoon, trying to reproduce a likeness of our old vicar. As I now contemplate this pitiful attempt, it makes me blush with shame, were there not attached to it for me a precious and sacred memory. But at that time I considered it a successful effort, and was so elated that when I led the cattle home from pasture, I drew the shapeless figure at least a hundred times from my pocket to admire it. That the form and garments should more or less resemble those of the vicar, was not what I regarded; but I had faithfully copied his three-cornered hat, and this at least was recognizable at sight.

“Fearing lest my sisters should wish to play with the little statuette, I hid it away, and only brought it out on reaching home.

“I seated myself in a corner of the room, my hand in my pocket, fondling my master-piece and buried in happy thought.

“My father had gone to town on business connected with his trade; my mother, brothers and sisters were at home, conversing about the owner of our farm. They had learned that the Chateau of Bordeghem now belonged to him, and that he had that very day driven to the village in a beautiful carriage to see his new possession.

“My mother spoke in a low tone, not to awaken the attention of her simple dumb child, for he only understood how to be silent and useless, or to scream like one possessed.

“While my mother discoursed about this important news, the door was suddenly opened, and a lady richly dressed entered our dwelling, holding by the hand a little girl who was but a year younger than I.

“This lady was the wife of the proprietor of our farm ; she knew my mother very well, from having received the rent several times through her. So she engaged familiarly in conversation with her about the country house her husband had just bought, adding that she would be able more than once, now the pleasant weather had come, to visit the people who tenanted the farms her husband, Monsieur Pavelyn, owned in the neighborhood.

“My brothers and sisters listened attentively to what the lady said.

“As to myself, I had jumped up and stood still, as if struck motionless, before the little girl. I trembled in every limb, my eyes glistened with admiration, my heart beat violently, and for the first time in my life the emotion I felt did not break forth in savage cries.

“The appearance of an angel, such as I had imagined one from my mother’s descriptions, could not have moved me more, for it was impossible for an angel to be more beautiful in my eyes than was that little child. Her brow and cheeks

were as pure as alabaster, her delicate lips as fresh and red as rose-leaves, her deep blue eyes were like the azure of the skies on a cloudless summer's day. Around her regular oval face her thick silky hair fell in rich curls. She was dressed in satin and silk; about her throat was a coral necklace, her bracelets were of gold, and her little feet were incased in red slippers.

“ Everything that belonged to her struck and astonished me with ever-growing admiration—even her pallor and sickly delicacy; for this very delicacy made her appear in my eyes as a superior creature of a substance quite above that of the fat, robust children inhabiting our village.

“ The little girl looked at me several minutes with her deep blue eyes, as if to ask the meaning of my strange attitude. Then her lips were parted with a sweet and gentle smile. This smile reached my heart like a ray of light, and drew from me a savage cry. I jumped backward and lifted my hands towards heaven, as if the child's smile had been something miraculous, which made me lose my mind.

“ My strange cry attracted the lady's attention. ‘ It is our little Lionel; do not pay any attention to the noise he makes, Madam Pavelyn. He is dumb, and tries ineffectually to speak.’

“ As she concluded these words she carried her hand to her brow, as if to convey the idea that I must be held excused because I did not possess my right senses, and was an innocent.

“I had often before intercepted such signs made by my father or my mother, and I perfectly understood their meaning. They had always grieved me, but at this moment, before the angelic creature who was observing me, this humiliating pantomime wounded me as if a knife had been plunged into my heart. Therefore, the sound that escaped from my bosom was not a cry, but a deep and tender plaint—a sort of prayer imploring pity. I bowed my head and began to weep.

“‘Such a pretty little boy! This is very unfortunate,’ muttered the lady; and, turning towards the little girl, she added:

“‘Rose, that poor child is dumb; he would like so to speak! But it is because he cannot he weeps so bitterly. Give him your hand, Rose; a sign of pity will comfort him.’

“Encouraged by the lady’s kind interest, I lifted up my head and saw the noble child advance towards me, with the same enchanting smile with which I had already been so deeply touched.

“She took my hand, pressed and stroked it, while her lips uttered words which resounded in my ears like celestial music.

“I cast a look of pride towards my brothers and sisters; this mark of friendship which the little lady had just shown me would atone for their disdain, and had filled my heart with joy and courage.

“Most assuredly the compassionate child read in my beaming looks the expression of an infinite gratitude, for she pressed my hand in a more

friendly manner, and said in a tone so gentle that I trembled in every member—

“‘Is your name Lionel? It is a pretty name. Ah, what a pity that you cannot talk!’

“Anguish drew from me some confused cries.

“‘You must not cry out so,’ she continued; ‘it is ugly. Will you never learn to talk, poor little Lionel—never?’

“I did not understand what was going on within me. It seemed to me that I would have had my hand cut off just then, to have been able to utter one single intelligible word. I was seized with a violent convulsion; my limbs were drawn up, my face became livid. I did not cry out, but made a superhuman effort to utter the charming name of her who had twice called mine with so much friendliness.

“Something was ruptured in my throat, and the name of ‘Rose! Rose!’ resounded twice clear and sonorously through the room.

“Exhausted by this gigantic effort, I allowed myself to fall upon a chair, and remained there stretched out, with a smile of happiness and ecstasy upon my countenance.

“‘Heaven be praised, my son has spoken!’ exclaimed my mother, with tears in her eyes. She ran towards me, took my hand, and besought me to repeat once more the words I had pronounced; but I well knew, after several ineffectual attempts, that my strength was no longer capable of so great a nervous tension.

“ Yet I was delighted with the success achieved, and endeavored to convey by signs that I felt confident and hoped to be able to learn to talk. I continued pointing to the pretty young lady, and clasped my hands before her, to make them understand that it was to her I should owe the gift of speech, the happiness of my life, and I thanked her as an angel sent by God to bring me hope and deliverance.

“ Rose was visibly touched with these marks of gratitude, and sincere joy shone in her blue eyes. It was no doubt sweet to her sympathetic heart to believe her presence had been a benefit to a poor child like me.

“ She pulled her mother’s shawl that she might stoop down, and whispered something to her, which being answered in the affirmative, she came towards me.

“ Placing her hand in her pocket, she drew forth a little white stone box, which was transparent, and all covered over with gold and silver stars. Then putting it into my hand, she said :

“ ‘ Here, Lionel, this is for you ; there are some sugar-plums in it, which you will find very good. You must do all you can to learn to talk, and when you know how, I will give you something even prettier than this.’

“ The sweet child had no other thought than to comfort me. These kind words were spoken through pure charity, an alms extended to misfortune. But her pity produced upon me a greater

effect than she could have imagined—her words fell singly like beneficent dew upon an oppressed heart, and were engraven in ineffaceable characters on my memory. I was so touched by them that I continued mechanically to turn my pretty little box around in my hands, and did not even notice that my mother took it from me to admire it in her turn.

“Then I recovered myself and endeavored to make the pretty little lady understand how sad I was that I could do nothing to thank her for her gift. I drew from my pocket the likeness of the vicar, and put it into the hand of my benefactress, conveying to her by my gestures that I had carved it myself, and was giving it to her in exchange for the box.

The lady, on seeing this shapeless object, appeared surprised at my simplicity. My mother made excuses for me, saying that I spent entire days in fashioning small statuettes, and that most naturally I looked upon them as very valuable. My brothers and sisters burst out laughing at my presumption.

“Rose looked at my poor present in silence, stood the good man up on her hand, turned him around, and seemed to derive much amusement from the toy.

“What did it matter to me that all the world should laugh at my work, if she alone, who was my protectress, considered it worthy her attention? Therefore, a sentiment of deep joy pervaded my

heart when Rose refused to let my mother take from her the figure of the vicar, and said to her :

“ ‘No, I beg you will let me keep it. That poor little boy carved it himself, and it is really pretty. I will show it to my father, and play with it this evening.’ ”

“ ‘That’s the way with children, farmeress Wolvenaer!’ said the lady, shrugging her shoulders. ‘Give them playthings and dolls that have cost a great price, and they prefer those of small value; then after an hour or two the plaything is forgotten and thrown aside, and they think of it no more.’ ”

“ My sorrowful looks and signs questioned Rose whether this would be the fate of my humble present. A shake of the head comforted me. She had understood me, and her gesture conveyed the promise to keep my little vicar.

“ ‘May you all remain well,’ said the lady; ‘it is time for us to go. M. Pavelyn will be waiting for us. Perhaps the carriage is now ready. You understand that this year we are not to be at the chateau, for it is quite empty; it is to be restored, repainted and refurnished, and will only be ready in the spring. Then I will return to visit you, for I like to be among the villagers. To-day we only came to visit the chateau. Rose, we must go now; give your hand once more to poor Lionel in token of farewell, and let us return to your father.’ ”

“ It was easy to read upon my face that the announcement of this sudden departure filled me with sorrow. Rose again pressed my hand, and whispered to me,

““You must not be grieved, Lionel. Learn quickly to talk, then I will come back; and make me some more figures—it will please me very much.’

“I placed my hands before my eyes not to witness her departure.

“In this position I remained a long while, until my mother began scolding me harshly for my want of politeness, and threatened to let my father know of my unreasonable conduct.

CHAPTER III.

"It would be difficult to convey to you the deep impression the little girl's visit had produced upon my mind. Even my parents found it hard to recognize in me their little savage. My thoughts had assumed a certain gravity, and it was seldom the discordant cries I used to indulge in escaped me.

"When I was at home, I generally retired to one corner of the room, where I remained motionless and silent, gazing on space. There stood ever before my eyes the delicate white apparition who smiled upon me, pressed my hand, and murmured in my ear in a friendly tone, 'Learn soon how to talk; I will then come back.'

"I scarcely ever played any more with my brothers and sisters, and escaped from the other children of the village. To think of her was the only occupation of my mind; ever repeating in my heart her tender words sufficed to me.

"I fear sir, you will think I am guilty of exaggeration. So deep a sentiment in a child of eleven, does not of course seem natural to you. Yet you of all others, who have retained a living memory of your childhood, must know that the heart of a child is more easily and deeply touched than that of one whose reason and experience have blunted more or less its sensibility. It is true that a child's emotions

are usually more fleeting; but I, with the want of speech, was placed in a position somewhat peculiar, as I was forced to meditate in solitude. The same thoughts presented themselves a hundred times to me; and this continued reaction of my mind upon itself induced a depth of sentiment which might have appeared sickly and peculiar in a child gifted with speech.

“However, the evidences of tender pity that the pretty young lady had given me had filled me full of pride; and whether it was pride or gratitude, or a secret sympathy that agitated me, certain it is that evening and morning—and even in the middle of the night—the image of my benefactress appeared to me, and all the strength of my soul was centred in that one thought.

“This singular absorption, and the wavering look in my eyes, were considered by my parents as unfortunate symptoms, and they did not doubt I was threatened with incurable idiocy.

“More than once when they expressed this fear, I essayed to make them understand they were mistaken; but then I yelled and cried as before. This only increased their trouble; and as my cries had now become disagreeable to myself, I felt a disgust for these useless attempts to make myself understood by speech.

“Everything went on between my parents and myself as before the visit of Madame Pavelyn. In a short time very little notice was taken of me; and to spare my father the painful sight of his witless

son, my mother would send me to the fields for entire days.

“There, in complete solitude, I could muse and reflect, from the break of day until nightfall recalled me to my home; but I did not spend my time in idleness—my benefactress had said two things to me: ‘Learn quickly how to talk, and make me some more figures.’

“This last wish I could easily accomplish, but the first—Learn to talk!

“Her wish was a law whose inflexibility frightened me, and yet which I desired to obey, even were my throat to be rent in the effort.

“During two long months I essayed constantly to repeat her name once more. I made all sorts of grimaces; I contracted my lips; I filled my mouth with small pieces of wood; I roughly pulled my rebellious tongue; but, though the perspiration stood on my brow, her cherished name would not escape from my throat, do what I would. The strange part was, that I heard perfectly, and could even judge of the quality of the sounds I produced. There was no impulse of the human voice that I was not at times able to execute by accident—no letter that I was unable to pronounce; but it seemed as though my vocal chords were all in confusion, and would not obey my will. When I endeavored to pronounce one letter or one word, others came in their stead; and, though sometimes I made preparation for hours before making a sound, with the certainty that this time at least

my voice would not oppose my efforts, I was ever overcome with the same bitter disappointment.

“I do not exaggerate when I say that I have shed tears a hundred times, that I have torn out my hair and rolled over and over on the ground convulsively with despair and rage, which indeed resembled utter madness.

“By slow degrees I became convinced of my powerlessness, and lost all hope of recovering my speech. Then sadness, discouragement and languor, took possession of me. The feeling of pride that Rose’s compassion had given birth to, made me think I should be able to rise above my trouble. This consoling, this bright perspective, had closed before my eyes; a dark cloud had veiled the bright star that lightened my future. I should ever remain witless and dumb, an unhappy creature, who could not even express his gratitude to those who pitied him.

“I was almost overcome for nearly a month with this terrible conviction; finally, when the last ray of hope was extinguished within me, I accepted my sad fate with resignation, and a degree of peace re-entered my soul.

“Then I commenced to carve little figures in willow wood, but no longer through pride, nor with any idea of distinguishing myself above the other children; no, I was only moved by a passive feeling of gratitude and duty. I knew my work would be grateful to the charitable little lady; this was the only motive for my industry.

“In a short while I had carved quite a number of statuettes: there were figures which I called cows, horses, sheep and swine, though they bore a strong resemblance to each other; there were also houses, churches, birds and men—but what pleased me most, what I looked at with the greatest satisfaction, was the figure of a rural guard, with his large hat and his shining sabre in his hand.

“I had obtained, after much begging of my mother, the key of a drawer in our bureau. I locked up my small masterpieces there, so as not to expose them to view until such time as Rose would return to Bordeghem. No one was to see those products of my art; she alone, for whom I had made them, should receive them from my hands before they had been touched by others.

“In that manner the months sped, and the winter passed away preceding her return.

“Towards the new year my mother was to go to town to pay for our farm. After many prayers and entreaties she consented to carry with her the figure of the rural guard, and to promise me she would give it in my name to the little daughter of our landlord.

“During my mother’s absence I was strangely agitated. I ran around the house and in the fields, impelled by a feeling of nervous agitation. What would Rose say of my work? Would she smile, and be glad of my present? At all events my mother would speak to her of me, and on her side she would say something too. It seemed to me, in

my anxious waiting, I heard Rose call my name, for it could be no other voice than hers—that silvery tone which resounded to my innermost soul, and made me shudder and look around me as if I heard her utter in a compassionate tone, ‘Poor little Lionel.’

“In the afternoon I was on the road half a mile from home, watching for my mother’s return. When I saw her I ran to meet her, and asked her, with extended arms and sparkling eyes, how my little rural guard had been received over there.

“M. Pavelyn had examined the statuette with interest, and had laughed at it with all his heart. Rose appeared satisfied, and sent me thanks for my present. She had added that in the following spring she would come to the chateau with her parents, and would be glad to have many of those little figures with which to play.

“My joy was unbounded. Carried away by my feelings, I began to jump and cry out, as I had done in the past.

“A few words from my mother hushed me at once, and took away all my joy. Rose had asked if poor Lionel did not yet know how to speak; this question recalled me to the memory of my powerlessness, and the consciousness of my misfortune.

“Alas! the good Rose had said to me, ‘You should learn to talk,’ and I, poor outcast from the world, was still as dumb as when she made us her visit. I would have given up the half of my life to carry out her kind desire; but it was not in my power to give her this proof of gratitude.

“I bent down my head, and walked silently in the sandy road, holding my mother’s hand; and though, in order to raise my courage, she related many other things about the charming little lady, she did not succeed in consoling me.

CHAPTER IV.

"The frost had passed away and the thaw had put M. Pavelyn, to disappear from our neighborhood. Spring was approaching, and with it would come the angelic creature who for seven months had absorbed all my thoughts.

"In my impatience, I walked every morning through the woods and lanes, to see whether the spring flowers were not giving signs of life. I watched the budding alders and hazels bursting into leaf with the first rays of awakening sunshine. I impatiently awaited the first blossoms of the wood anemone, which shows itself before everything else at the foot of the young oaks. I followed the birds in their flight, to discover in their beaks the wisp of straw, a sign of confidence in the return of good weather.

"After a great many cold nights, the air became milder, and to my intense joy, the evidences of awakening nature were more and more apparent. Soon the violets lent their perfume to the steep sides of the hills looking towards the south, the butter-cups gilded the prairies, and thousands of easter daisies glistened with their silver stars on the velvety young turf. Then the blackthorn, the strawberry and lychnis burst into bloom. The trees and shrubs unfolded their leaves by degrees ;

and the syringa put out its buds of white flowers, which were to fill with sweet perfume the fresh atmosphere of the month of May.

"The long awaited moment was now at hand. Any day Rose might leave the city and take up her abode at the chateau, for the weather was warm and the sunlight clear—both of which had warmly invited to walks in the country.

"Poor fool that I was! In dead earnest, my joy doubled, I felt on the contrary that my courage was deserting me, and a secret disquiet fell upon my heart as the long wished-for moment approached.

"She would ask me, 'Do you not know yet how to talk?' and I, blushing with shame, my heart full of dissatisfaction and pain, would have to answer her by signs that I still remained as dumb as ever. When this thought had once taken possession of me, my fears increased rapidly and out of all proportion, because there was nothing to combat them. Sometimes I paled suddenly when my excited mind brought up before me the image of little Rose. I trembled at hearing the fatal question fall from her lips—'Do you not know yet how to talk?'

"I became sad and solitary, and plunged in painful thought.

"Up to this time I had applied myself with ardor to the carving of my figures. As my drawer had been a long time full, I had presented the least successful to my sisters, and had made, according to my opinion, better and newer ones.

"But just now my discouragement was so great,

that I no longer had the strength or the desire to pursue my work, and for more than two weeks had kept the key of the drawer in my pocket without opening it.

“It became still worse when one Monday on my father’s return from market, he announced to us that M. Pavelyn, his wife and daughter, would now be at the chateau. One would have said from my manner that a secret sorrow was acting upon my nerves. It came to pass that I would shiver and pale twenty times in an hour without any apparent cause. My mother thought me ill, and made me tea of some of the spring herbs which are good preventives of fever. I drank the remedy without acknowledging the cause of my strange agitation, but as soon as I could, I ran far away from the house, and hid myself in the woods, as if this retreat could save me from the terrible question, ‘Do you not yet know how to talk?’ which was ever resounding in my ear and pursuing me like a reproach.

“I do not know how to explain all this, but while I dreaded Rose’s coming more than I desired it, taking to the woods not to be present when she arrived to visit us, I found myself involuntarily walking in the neighborhood of the chateau, and in the very road she would have to take to come to our farm. It is true, after a few moments I would fly; but each time I returned to the same spot almost unconsciously.

“One especial day—it was the 20th of May of

the year 1806—I had wandered about the woods from early morning, and had finally reached the avenue of the chateau. After gazing a long while at the buildings, behind the grove of seringas, I turned away, and resting my head on the trunk of a tree, looked down on the ground, absorbed in painful reflection.

“I do not know how long I remained in this attitude, but I was suddenly awakened by the silvery tones of a voice which cried from afar, in joyful accents:

“‘Lionel! Lionel!’

“It was that of Rose, the same voice that spoke to me in my dreams, so that I did not hasten to turn around, for I thought it but an hallucination of the brain.

“I was seized with a violent fit of trembling. I saw Rose—Rose herself, who, walking between a handsome lady and gentleman, and followed by a servant, was leaving the garden of the chateau to enter the avenue.

“She drew the gentleman along by the hand, running towards me; but the gentleman, who was her father, held her back until she was within four or five feet of me, then he could no longer restrain his daughter’s impatience. She bounded forward and seized my trembling hand. I paled, for I saw with uneasiness the moment was approaching when the much dreaded question: ‘Well, Lionel, can you now talk?’ would be asked, and indeed they were the first words she spoke.

"I bowed my head upon my breast, and my silent tears told her that I was as dumb as ever.

"'Poor Lionel!' said the charming girl, 'you must not weep for that. Take courage; last year you were able to utter my name: by degrees you will learn to talk.'

"During this time her parents had approached us. Her father placed his hand upon my head, and forcing me gently to lift up my eyes towards him, he said, in a tone of great kindness,

"'This, then, is the shoemaker's little son, who gave you the small figures of the vicar and the rural guard. He has handsome eyes and beautiful hair, and is a pretty child. So, you cannot then talk at all?' he asked me, 'a boy as bright and intelligent as you is dumb, and would remain dumb? It will indeed be a great misfortune! And why do you weep, little one? Has any one done you any harm?'

"'No, father; he weeps because he does not know how to talk,' said the little lady, sighing.

"'Well, since he hears, and was able to articulate your name, it cannot be impossible that he should learn to talk. If any one took a little trouble—but these peasants' children are left pretty much to themselves, and they do not appreciate the full value of speech.'

"As these words reached me I could no longer contain myself; the blame implied wounded me deeply. I essayed by every possible gesture and inarticulate cry to convey to Rose's father that

good will had not been wanting to me, and for months I had made every effort to repeat once more his daughter's name.

"He looked at me astonished, but with evident interest. My eyes sparkled, my movements were full of energy, and I explained by intelligent signs that I would willingly have my left arm cut off in exchange for the gift of speech. He took my hands, restrained my gestures, and obliged me to keep quiet; then I heard him say to the lady:

"'Unfortunate little boy, isn't he? He is a fine child, and very interesting. And the woman Wolvenaer undertakes to say there is something wrong about his brain? No, no; she is entirely mistaken. That child is not an idiot at all; on the contrary, his mind is quick and bright.'

"The look I gave Rose's father beamed doubtless with sincere gratitude, and I saw the compassionate gentleman was deeply moved by it.

"I felt quite consoled, and was filled with renewed courage, and was about to express my gratitude with more gestures; but Rose had again taken my hand and asked me if I had carved other statuettes for her.

"I counted rapidly on my fingers, opened my arms wide, and moved my key about before her eyes, to make her understand I had carved a good many, quite a pile, and that they were at home, locked up in a bureau.

"Rose, a prey to intense curiosity, begged her parents to make haste, that she might the sooner see the little figures.

“ They yielded to her wishes, and a few moments later Mr. Pavelyn with his family entered our modest home.

“ Without taking any notice of the bows and other ceremonies my parents were engaged in, I flew to the bureau, and drew open the drawer that contained my six months’ work, and began to spread out all my figures on our large table.

“ I arranged them one after the other in a procession, like a caravan of men and beasts on their travels. There were so many that the retinue finally covered the entire table, and there remained no room for my small houses and churches.

“ Growing astonishment was visible in the little lady’s face, and when she finally took all these riches in with a single glance, and I made her understand they all belonged to her, she began clapping her hands and jumping about for joy. This joy rendered me extremely happy, and made me believe I had done really good things, as I had so entirely reached the end of my efforts.

“ I explained, at length, to Rose, by every kind of look and gesture, what each of my little figures represented. I pushed the cows along the table, the horses I made to gallop, I enacted the part of a shepherd gathering together his flock and bringing them back to the stables, I placed the birds near each other on the tops of the houses and the belfry of the churches, as if they had flown there of themselves.

“ Rose opening wide her large blue eyes, looked

on without speaking at the little scene I enacted for her; but she seemed enchanted with a childlike joy. An infinite sentiment of happiness pervaded my heart. My parents were engaged in conversation with M. and Madame Pavelyn, and my brothers and sisters listened to what was being said. Rose and I were engrossed with each other; she only gave her attention to my figures and my little plays.

“Beads of perspiration stood out on my forehead from the efforts I went through to make her understand thoroughly by signs what I wished to express. I had just shown her a hunter, who had brought down a hare, and the dog that went after the stricken game. Then I figured a combat between two soldiers, making them lay their great swords one upon the other. I no doubt enacted this scene in a very lively and comprehensible manner, for Rose seemed excited and frightened; but when one of my soldiers was thrown down by his enemy, and in his fall overturned a whole row of cows, horses, and even trees and houses, we both broke out into a long fit of laughter, and Rose frisked about with pleasure; to add to her joy, I ran and jumped around the table, giving forth piercing and unearthly shrieks.

The noise we were making interrupted the conversation of Rose's parents with my father. They looked at us for a moment kindly, and seemed delighted that their daughter was amusing herself so innocently, and that her face was beaming with pleasure.

“The gentleman came near to the table, picking up here and there some of the most singular—or perhaps some of the best—of the little figures, examined them with interest, shook his head as if pleased, then patted me on the shoulder, saying:

“‘Did you do all this by yourself? Hurrah, my little boy! They are certainly not very beautiful, but there is something in them. There is a good deal of spirit in those two dragoons over there, who seem to be advancing with their long legs. What are you going to do with this legion of men and beasts?’

“I pointed with my finger to his daughter.

“‘All this is for me, father;’ exclaimed Rose. ‘Oh! how well I shall be able to play! Lionel will teach me how they should follow each other, every one according to his rank, as they are now placed.’

“‘But Rose,’ questioned the father, ‘Why despoil the poor child of all his playthings?’

“I ran towards the end of the room to procure a wicker basket, into which I gathered my figures, and handed them to Rose. She hesitated to accept my present, and looked at her father inquiringly. I foresaw a refusal, and shivered with fear; but I clasped my hands appealingly before M. and Madame Pavelyn, and my eyes sparkled with so ardent a prayer they called their servant, who had remained near the door, and gave her the basket containing my handiwork. I raised up my hands in token of joy, and emitted a cry of triumph.

“Our landlord remained a short time longer, talking of Rose and me with my parents. What I caught of their words, uttered in a low tone, was that their daughter’s health was delicate, and that the open air would be of service to her.

“They also expressed their satisfaction in seeing Rose, who generally took so little interest in play, amusing herself so heartily and in such an animated manner.

“After this conversation M. Pavelyn took my hand, and said very kindly :

“‘We must go now, Lionel; but come to the chateau to-morrow about one o’clock. Rose too will make you a present in return for your little figures. It is something we brought you from town. You will dine with us, and you can run and play with Rose in the pretty garden. Good-bye, my good little boy.’

“‘Lionel, Lionel,’ cried out the little girl as she went away, ‘oh, to-morrow how we will play!’

“I dropped into a chair trembling violently. What! should I dine at the chateau, at the same table with Rose? Her parents showed me as much friendship and compassion as she did! I, the dumb boy, was preferred to my brothers and sisters! To-morrow, oh, to-morrow!

CHAPTER V.

“How agitated was my sleep that night! A hundred times I dreamed that with my hands in Rose’s I played in a beautiful garden—as beautiful as that of Paradise, which my mother had often described to me. We ran and danced and skipped, and amused ourselves with inexpressible joy and pleasure. Rose spoke a thousand kind and tender words to me, and I—poor unfortunate!—in my dream I had the gift of speech, and testified my gratitude in clear and beautiful language, full of feeling.

“Then the scene changed. Anon I was seated at a large table, and was eating such succulent food and appetizing delicacies, that our blood-puddings from the kermes, and the best sugar-plums from the sacristan’s shop, were as nothing to them.

“At other times my imagination essayed to resolve the enigma which was troubling my mind, and had piqued my curiosity from the day before. Rose had promised me a present in exchange for my figures. What could this present be? It was impossible for me to form a probable idea. I did think of a large wooden hobby-horse, a fine cravat, or a big cake, and of many other things; but my sense told me I was entirely mistaken.

“Deluded by my impatience, I rose in the middle

of the night, thinking it was morning, but my mother sent me back to bed; finally day began to break. We had hardly taken our coffee, when I begged my mother would dress me. She took all my Sunday clothes out of the drawer, but had trouble in making me understand that I was only to go to the chateau after twelve o'clock, and that I still had to wait half a day. I remained a long while seated in a corner of the room, with my eyes fixed on the hands of the clock. After I had endeavored several times to convey to my mother by cries that the clock had stopped and she should make it go, she took me by the shoulder and put me out of doors, forbidding me to return to the house until twelve o'clock had struck.

"I wandered about the woods and fields, returned to the village, walked around the church and looked with annoyance at the lazy needle of the sun-dial, until finally I heard the first stroke of twelve, and gave a cry of joy.

"When I returned to the house, they were all at table. I took my usual place beside my father, but my plate remained empty, as was natural since I was going to dine at the chateau. My parents jested about the delicious food I should taste that day; my brothers and sisters were silent, and their looks were unfriendly. The thick soup seemed to afford them less pleasure than usual, and they more than once allowed their spoons to fall into their plates with despondency when my father talked of roasted birds, and mountains of cake. As for me, I

took little notice of what was said; these alluring descriptions did not interest me in the least; I only saw the sweet smile that on Rose's face was to beam brightly upon me.

"As soon as dinner was over, my mother took me on her knee and began to undress me. She washed me with warm water and soap, and wet my hair that it might curl the better. It was long before my toilet was completed, for I was to be as fine as possible, though my father undertook to say it was absurd to dress me in my best clothes to go and play in.

"Before I was allowed to leave, my mother placed me before her and told me in a grave and severe tone how I should behave at the chateau, and what I should do and not do. She forgot nothing. I was carefully to wipe my feet on the straw mats I should find before the doors. I was to take off my cap and bow, and blow my nose on the handkerchief she had put in my trousers' pocket. I was not to scream and gesticulate, and if anything was given me, I was not to fail to kiss my hand, not only that this was polite, but because I had no other way of expressing my gratitude.

"One o'clock struck in the tower, when my mother gave me her farewell kiss, and trembling with impatience, I bounded out of the house.

"I drew but one breath as I ran across the village to the avenue of the chateau, but when I approached the iron railing and saw no one in the garden, I was seized with secret fear; yet I entered

the vast enclosure with slow and uncertain steps, looking about to see if I could perceive any one. How lovely was the prospect that opened out before my astonished gaze! A large grass plot, like a prairie, extended on every side to the very trunks of the large trees. In the centre of the green grass ran clear water, which I should have taken for the same stream that went by our house, but it was broader and deeper. An arched bridge like a gigantic bow spanned it. This bridge was formed of branches of oak admirably interlaced, and it seemed to me I should never dare cross it, lest it might break beneath my weight.

“All through the garden grew tall trees, so near to each other they formed an impenetrable forest. At the roots of these large trees lilacs grew in such great profusion that their purple flowers encircled the garden like a huge garland, and perfumed the air with the most delicious odor. Wherever my eye fell, whether in the paths or among the bushes, I saw plants and flowers utterly unknown to me, and which astonished me by their strange shapes and brilliant colors.

The complete silence and entire solitude which reigned around made me afraid. I approached the chateau step by step. My heart beat, and certainly I should not have dared go further, but that a door was suddenly opened, and Rose joyfully ran to meet me. She took my hand and drew me towards the building, and yet while scolding me, said:

“‘Why are you so slow? This is not well of

you, Lionel. We have already begun dinner, and my father may be angry.'

"She saw by my face that her words troubled me.

"'Come, come!' she cried out, 'I only say this in joke; you must not be afraid—be gay! Ah! how we are going presently to play and skip in the beautiful garden. Is it not so? What a pity you cannot talk. But never mind; I understand you very well.'

"My benefactress led me up to the building, and made me cross a long vestibule. Remembering my mother's injunctions, I wiped my feet on all the mats I came to, so that finally Rose exclaimed, jestingly:

"'How now, Lionel! what is the matter with your feet? Be done; that is enough.'

"At the end of the vestibule stood a man whose clothes were trimmed with silver galloon. I took off my cap and held it in my hands with timorous respect, but he, without a word, opened one side of the door before which he stood.

I saw a large apartment, the walls of which were glistening with gold rods. Rose's parents were seated at a table. I remained standing on the sill of the door, cap in hand, scarcely hearing the words of welcome which were addressed to me by M. and Madame Pavelyn.

"Rose led me to a chair and obliged me to seat myself. My head was spinning; I kept my eyes down, confused and trembling.

“A servant fastened a huge white napkin in front of me so that I could scarcely move my arms.

“Rose’s parents and even the servants were very much amused by my shamefacedness, and laughed under their breath. The compassionate young girl alone endeavored to encourage me by speaking kindly words.

“M. and Mme. Pavelyn laughed outright when I kissed my hand in token of thanks to the servant, who had placed a slice of bread beside my plate.

“I was altogether disturbed; the perspiration stood out on my forehead, and my heart beat so violently I had difficulty in breathing. The soup was steaming in the plate before me, and every one was begging me to eat; but I was agitated, and looked stupidly at my plate.

“Rose took pity on my confusion and came to my assistance. She brought her chair as near mine as possible, re-arranged more comfortably the napkin around my neck, and placed the spoon in my hand. At first, I mechanically obeyed all she told me; but finally, thanks to her words of encouragement, I gained more courage. She watched like a good little mother over her awkward protege. She made the servant cut my meat, told me the names of the dishes and the seasoning that went with them. She showed me how to hold my fork, and place the bones of the chicken at one side of my plate, and how I must wipe my hands and mouth with my napkin; in a word, she taught me how to eat properly, with delicate attention and

tender solicitude which filled my heart with gratitude.

“There were tarts and sweet things which tasted exquisitely, but I scarcely knew the savor of what I ate. The elegance of the apartment, the flashing gilding on the walls, the mirrors that reflected everything, wherein sight was lost in infinite space, all this overwhelmed me with its grandeur and magnificence. One thing above all excited my admiration and irresistibly attracted my attention. This was a large white statue which was to my left, on a huge pedestal against the wall. I could not make out what it represented—it was a half-naked man, who only touched the ground with his toes and seemed to wish to fly through the air; there were two small wings behind his head and two at his feet; in his right hand he held two serpents intertwined.

“At once Rose, seeing my astonishment, told me this statue represented the god Mercury; but as my mother, while she made me repeat my Catechism, had never spoken to me of such a god, the explanation conveyed no idea whatever. Moreover, it was not the meaning of the statue which my eyes sought in this work of art. I was astonished that in wood or marble the human form could be so well imitated; it seemed to have life. More than once I had lowered my head with a shudder, fearing lest this unknown god should make a dive at me. I also examined with great attention how the statue was made, and endeavored to engrave its appear-

ance on my memory—as if it were possible for me to carve in willow with my knife anything that could resemble it.

“During dinner wine had been poured into my glass, and I had been made to drink some. The red liquor seemed to me sharp and bitter. When the dessert was served, Rose told me they would bring me some sweet wine, which would be more to my taste. While she was speaking, the servant approached the table with a bottle all silvered over. I looked to see what he was going to do with a pair of pincers he held in his hand—

“Suddenly there was a report identical with that of fire-arms; and as Rose hid her face in her hands screaming aloud, I thought something terrible had happened to her.

“Trembling like a reed, I jumped up; a cry of terror escaped me, and I called out, ‘Rose! Rose!’

“‘Oh! oh! poor Lionel has spoken again,’ said the little girl, joyfully; ‘you heard him, did you not, papa? He pronounced my name as well and distinctly as one who knows how to talk.’

“She laughingly made me comprehend that the report I heard was only caused by the cork leaving the neck of the bottle with force, and she had only pretended to be afraid for fun. To soothe my fears she placed in my hand a glass of sparkling wine, and made me empty it almost entirely.

“During this time her parents conversed about me, and of the strange phenomenon of which they had been witness. M. Pavelyn made me try once

more to repeat his daughter's name, but was forced to recognize, when I had made several ineffectual attempts, that it had now become impossible for me to articulate any given sound by the mere force of will.

“ ‘It is under the effects of fear or violent emotion, that that boy articulates a word by accident,’ he said to Madame Pavelyn. ‘I have frequently read that people who were mute from their infancy had recovered the power of speech through some terrible blow. The same thing might happen to the son of Master Wolvenaer ; but who knows whether anything will impress or frighten him deeply enough to restore his speech completely and forever ?’

“I did not quite understand what he meant, but his words threw me into profound reflection, which I was only awakened from when M. Pavelyn told Rose to go and get his present and give it to me.

“The young girl left the room by a side door, and soon returned holding before me an object covered with paper. While she came towards me, she took it out of its cover and finally placed it in my hand. It was some sort of a closed knife, but it shone like silver, and the handle was of a kind of shell, which reflected blue, yellow and silver, when the light fell upon it.

“Rose took it from me, and while successively opening the several blades which it held, she said :

“ ‘Lionel, this is my present in exchange for all the little figures you made me. See, this first blade is a large strong knife, with which you could almost

fell a little tree; this one is a pen-knife, and here is a smaller one, and yet there is another more diminutive still; here is a file, and a saw, and a gimlet, and a pair of scissors, all wrought in English steel, refined, and well tempered, as my father says. Now, indeed, you will be able to carve statuettes, will you not? I chose it myself, Lionel,' she continued, as I contemplated the pretty knife with admiration mingled with astonishment. 'My mother wished to give you a large cake, but I well knew a present like this would give you more pleasure. Was I mistaken? Was I not right?'

"Tears coursed down my cheeks, and I began kissing my two hands, while I gave forth stifled sobs which I could not restrain. My eyes no doubt just now spoke a most expressive language, for all those who observed me, even the servants, were deeply touched with the gratitude they saw written there.

"I held in my hands Rose's precious gift. I opened and shut successively the little knives, the file and little saw, and was already using it in imagination. What riches! Tools of every kind! An entire workshop! I should in future be able to carve figures for my sweet protectress from morning until night, and how much better I should work with these tools, chosen and given by her!

"I was so agitated with my joy and admiration that I did not hear what M. Pavelyn was saying to me.

"'Come, my boy,' said he, raising his voice,

‘give Rose the beautiful knife, that she may lay it aside until such time as you return home, else you will forget to play. Go now together to the garden, run and skip around as much as you can. The weather is mild and healthy, we will take our coffee out of doors, and may see at a distance if you are playing as you should.’

“I left the parlor with Rose. As we went along she took two small green silk nets which were hanging beside the staircase, gave me, one and explained that we were going in pursuit of butterflies.

“As soon as I found myself under the blue sky, entirely free, and alone with Rose, the timidity which weighed upon my heart like lead, disappeared, and I breathed freely.

“Rose told me that in the morning she had run nearly two hours after butterflies without catching one; but that I, who was strong and active, would certainly be able to catch her some.

“She had scarcely said this when we saw two white butterflies emerge from the grove of syringas and fly about on the grass. I gave a cry, and we both precipitated ourselves upon these first of our wished-for prey.

“Dancing, laughing, and jumping, we pursued the butterflies; but whether I was not sufficiently expert in managing the net, or that the frightened creatures were able to elude us, we had been running about for more than a quarter of an hour without success. Our foreheads were wet with perspir-

ation, and our cheeks burned with pleasure and excitement.

“M. and Madame Pavelyn, seated on a terrace in front of the chateau, took part in our pleasure, and clapped their hands each time Rose gave a light bound as evincing strength and the desire to live.

“Finally I caught one of the white butterflies in my net—it was a cause for pleasure and rejoicing, as if we had found a treasure. Rose ran towards her parents, who laughed heartily at her excitement. A box was brought and the butterfly pinned into it.

“M. Pavelyn said he was very much pleased, and that I could come and play frequently, if Rose continued to amuse herself so pleasantly; but the young girl had not the patience to wait for her father to finish speaking—she drew me towards the grass plot, exclaiming:

“‘Look, over yonder! two butterflies, three butterflies, four butterflies! Quick! Quick!’

“I caught some more of the poor things. We continued bringing them to M. Pavelyn, who feigned sympathy with our joy, and held the box ready.

“At last Rose also caught one, which was opening and shutting its wings on the trunk of a tree in the sun: it was a dark red butterfly, with spots of blue and silver.

“It is impossible to depict Rose’s joy; like an escaped deer, she crossed the grass, and flew towards her parents with such speed that I could

scarcely follow her. She had herself caught the bright little insect; it seemed to her in future no butterfly could escape her, and a moment after she was again running about with ardor.

"We long continued this amusing pursuit. M. and Madame Pavelyn had gone in after partaking of coffee.

"While I jumped around, net in hand, near the grove of syringas, Rose, in pursuing a butterfly in an opposite direction, had left me behind.

"Suddenly I hear a loud cracking sound. I turn my eyes towards the spot whence the strange noise proceeds. Great heavens! What a horrible sight! I see Rose fall over the broken balustrade of the bridge, and sink into the water with a cry of agony! My tongue is rent; blood gushes from my mouth; I scream with all the strength a mute can impart to his cries, but they are words that fall from my lips, words clear and distinct.

"Rose, Rose! Help, help! Oh, God! Oh, God!"

"My piercing cry resounded through the garden, and reached the chateau.

"I flew; I seemed to have wings; my feet scarcely touched the ground. From the top of the bridge my wandering sight seemed to take in nothing more than a part of my benefactress' skirt. Without considering I did not know how to swim, I jumped into the pond beside her. The water nearly reaches my mouth, but I feel my feet have touched bottom. I seize Rose's clothes, take her

head in my two hands, and raise her up out of the water. The effort makes me sink in the slime, water gets into my nose and mouth with every breath that I draw. I am suffocating, and know my strength is failing me. Then dawns upon me the certainty I am drowning—am about to die, but it is not the fear of death which embitters this last moment for me. No; it is the painful remembrance that Rose, too, will die. Even when the last spasm reanimates me, I feel no other pain than the thought of Rose's misfortune.

“It was later only that I learned what had happened to us.

“My loud cry of distress had reached the chateau. M. and Mme. Pavelyn, as well as the domestics, had issued forth alarmed, looking around to see what could have happened. While they were seeking us before and behind the chateau, and Rose was being called for with loud cries, one of the servants approached the bridge and saw the white dress of his young mistress floating on the water. He walked along the edge of the pond, caught up Rose, who was unconscious, and conveyed her to the lawn.

“When Mme. Pavelyn saw the inanimate and dripping body of her daughter, she fainted away in her husband's arms, with a cry of mortal terror. M. Pavelyn confided her to the care of a servant, and hurried, half dead with fear, to his daughter.

“Rose, who had not been long under water, and was able to breathe as long as I could hold her

head up, soon showed animation, and opened her eyes.

“The first word M. Pavelyn uttered, after manifesting his joy at the safety of his child, was my name. Then the servant who had rescued her remembered having felt something under the water, and being obliged to tear Rose’s apron to disengage her from some object to which she seemed attached. He again went into the pond, found me without difficulty, and placed me on the grass, not far from the spot where they were making every effort to bring Rose to life.

“It was a frightful scene: here a mother who had fainted in the horrible certainty that she had seen the drowned body of her child — there a father in despair, recalling with kisses to life and feeling the inanimate body of his daughter — a little further away, that of a young boy extended motionless as if his soul had fled forever.

“M. Pavelyn, in spite of his emotion, had not lost his presence of mind. He had at once sent one of the gardeners for the doctor, who went in haste, telling him to close the iron gate, and not to speak of what had just happened in the village. Then he placed his daughter near his fainting wife, that he might take care of them both at one time. He succeeded in bringing Mme. Pavelyn to consciousness, and with the assistance of his servants carried her at once to the chateau with his child.

“During this time others were employed in rubbing and rolling me upon the ground, but spite of their efforts I gave no sign of life.

As soon as M. Pavelyn had reassured his wife, and his daughter was placed in a warm bed, he returned to the spot where they were about blowing tobacco smoke into my nostrils. This generous man knelt by me, took my two hands in his, and endeavored to restore me. Rose, who had entirely recovered consciousness, related to him that I had jumped into the pond and held her head up to prevent her drowning. Her father made her believe that I too was better, for he feared with good grounds that in her weak state the news of my death would be a fatal blow.

“M. Pavelyn ordered me to be taken to the kitchen, as it was very far away from his daughter’s sleeping apartment. They brought bedding, undressed me, and covered me with heavy blankets. The doctor finally arrived and used energetic means to restore my breathing, and my pulse, which had ceased to beat. He succeeded after long efforts. I made a motion and opened my eyes, but neither heard nor saw, and whatever they whispered to me, or whatever signs they made, I showed no intelligence of what was going on around me. Only then M. Pavelyn sent a servant to tell my parents with all possible caution that I had fallen into the water, and that the cold and fright had somewhat overcome me.

“My parents, fearing a greater danger, hastened to the chateau. Seeing me alive, they had the courage to rise above their pain, and requested I should be carried home to be nursed.

“My father covered me up in a sheet and blanket, carried me back in his arms, and placed me in bed.

“Thanks to the doctor’s prescriptions, a great reaction took place, and I was attacked with fever which for a second time threatened my life. The doctor feared the heat in my blood might fly to the brain, and put a speedy end to my sufferings.

“I remained in this condition until midnight; then the fever left me by degrees, and I fell into a deep sleep. The doctor gave assurance that the greatest danger had passed, and he thought he could say, too, the accident would have no serious consequences. My mother and eldest sister alone remained to watch by my bedside.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHEN I opened my eyes the next morning, quite late, I saw with astonishment Rose sitting by my bedside holding my hand in hers.

“It was then truly her voice which while murmuring gently in my ear, ‘Poor little Lionel,’ had awakened me from a long slumber. With a quiet glance I saw my parents too, both my sisters, the good Rose, and a neighbor.

“At first I could remember nothing that had happened, and I looked inquiringly at my protectress, as if to ask why she was seated beside my bed.

“‘Keep quiet, Lionel,’ she said to me, ‘you will soon be well, but never more shall we play near the pond.’

“Then memory reasserted itself, a cry of delight escaped me, and I cried with the laugh of a young madcap,

“‘Rose, you live!—this dream’—

“‘He is speaking, he has spoken!’ exclaimed my parents, running to my bedside, with arms upraised.

“I, more surprised than they, on hearing my own words, shuddered, and closed my mouth firmly, lest a second attempt should again prove my powerlessness, and bring me cruel disappointment.

“My father embraced me with tears.

“‘Lionel, my poor son, oh! speak, speak once more, that I may thank God in all confidence for this unlooked-for favor.’

“Without turning my eyes away from Rose, I murmured in bewilderment,

“‘Speak? Yes! Rose—water—not dead—happy, happy.’

“The little girl clapped her hands with joy; my parents wept, and thanked heaven. During this time I uttered with feverish haste numbers of meaningless words, only to hear again the sound of my voice, and assure myself that now the gift of speech was really restored to me. Those around were not less astonished than I at the confused chattering that fell from my lips, and all regarded me with happy surprise, as if a miracle had been wrought in their presence.

“At last Rose began relating how we had played together in the garden of the chateau, how I had jumped into the pond, and how we had both been rescued by a servant.

“My parents, after their first transports of joy, added some further details to Rose’s narrative, and in this manner I learned all that had happened the day before.

“I had risked my life to save that of Rose! She loved me for this, she said, and her parents were grateful for my gratitude and courage. I had made myself worthy of M. Pavelyn’s protection. This event had brought me nearer to Rose. And,

moreover God, no doubt to reward me, had gifted me with speech, and lifted me out of my moral degradation. I was so proud and happy that my eyes shone with joy.

"I still had some difficulty in speaking, and my language was sometimes confused. I knew how substantially to use the names of persons and things; but putting words together, and the proper construction of sentences, embarrassed me.

"My illness had no consequences, so that when quiet had entered my soul, I evinced a great desire for food, and asked for a piece of bread and butter. My mother brought me some bread soaked in milk, and I was obliged to content myself with this, though I was hungry enough to have devoured a whole rye loaf. To my regret, they would not allow me to get out of bed either, for the doctor had forbidden it.

"Rose talked gently to me, and endeavored by a thousand friendly demonstrations to express her gratitude. As soon as I was entirely well we would play again in the beautiful garden of the chateau; but I need never be afraid of the water any more, as the gardener was now occupied in surrounding the pond with an open wooden palisade, and in building upon the bridge another hand-rail, which would be solid enough to allay all fear.

"The charming little girl left me at the end of a half hour, to go and announce to her parents the happy news of my entire cure.

"I spent all the evening of that day on my

mother's lap and my father's knee, and I was obliged to talk again and again, to charm them with the sound of my voice.

"When my mother had put me in my own bed, with the sign of the cross on my forehead and a last kiss on my lips, I fell asleep quietly, and the sweetest and happiest dreams lulled my slumbers.

"The next morning I rose as usual, and breakfasted with my brothers and sisters. All night I had dreamed of the handsome knife given me by Rose. I remembered that M. Pavelyn had had it put away for me. I could not keep the knife out of my head, and I would gladly have run to the chateau for it, had I dared to risk being so bold.

"As Rose did not come, spite of my long waiting, I went forth from the house and walked by myself on the road that led to the chateau.

"I soon saw her emerge from the iron gate with her nurse; she was making signs to me in the distance, which evinced great joy. When she came near me, she seized my hand, and said in transports of joy:

"'Lionel, Lionel, I have good news! Oh, if you knew what it was, you would jump with joy! I myself am so happy for you, that I feel my heart beat. Do you know where we are going? To your father and mother. They are to come to the chateau and talk about you.'

"'About me? My father at the chateau!' I muttered, with astonishment.

"She replied with great gravity, lowering her voice as if she did not wish her nurse to hear :

" 'Lionel, you are only a peasant's son ; is it not so ? At least, my father says so. If you remained as you are now, you would become a peasant, too—a poor man who would all his life be obliged to make wooden shoes, or work in the fields. My father said you deserved a better fate, because it was you who saved me from drowning. He thinks of having you taught, and giving you a good education. This is what he wishes himself to say to your parents.'

"Deeply agitated, though I did not understand all the importance of this news, I remained thoughtful and silent.

" 'Are you not pleased ?' she asked, reproachfully, 'yet you should rejoice. Learning, too, is a source of riches. It is by study that many peasants' sons have become distinguished in the world. And you see, Lionel,' she continued, after a pause, 'I like to play with you very much, yet I am sorry you are only a peasant. My father will have you educated ; you will no longer be a peasant, but be suitably dressed. Then, too, in town, as I do here, I can walk and play with you. We will be like brother and sister. Will it not be nice ?'

" 'Ah ! this is too delightful !' I exclaimed. 'Rose my sister ! This is too much, too much !'

"We walked a few steps in silence. Then she said, quietly, taking the tone of a guardian who was full of solicitude, or rather like a tender mother,

“ ‘ You must always be good, Lionel, and study well, do you hear? I will help you. I will teach you your letters, for I know how to read well in Flemish and in French. I have a great many pretty books, with nice pictures — “ Little Tom Thumb,” “ The Ass’s Skin,” and “ Gulliver in the Moon.” If you do not learn I will put you in the corner, but if you are attentive and sensible I will give you sugar-plums and good things. So you will learn to read quickly, won’t you? and my mother will buy me new books with beautiful stories in them. Then, indeed, we will have fun together !’

“ My reply consisted of a few grateful words which I stammered forth. The life she depicted, and into which I saw further than she did, appeared the summit of happiness; but I greatly doubted whether it was in reserve for me.

“ ‘ My mother wanted to place you in a counting room when you are grown,’ continued Rose, ‘ but my father, who loves you very much, Lionel, says that will not do. He wants to make a sculptor of you. A sculptor is a man who carves statues like that of the god Mercury you saw in our dining-room. He is an artist; and an artist, my father says, is as highly esteemed in the world as the richest man.’

“ ‘ Oh! to become a sculptor, and be your brother !’ I cried, lifting up my arms to heaven.

“ We were near our house, and went in. Rose delivered her message. My parents dressed them-

selves hastily, and were soon ready to follow the young girl and her nurse.

“As soon as Rose told me her father wanted to make a sculptor of me, I felt an ardent desire to possess the handsome knife. I mentioned it to Rose, and she promised me on leaving that she would give it to my mother to bring to me.

CHAPTER VII.

“WHEN my parents returned from the chateau, a strange happiness shone in their eyes. My mother kissed me enthusiastically on both cheeks, my father placed his hand upon my head with a feeling of pride, and predicted a splendid future for me.

“M. Pavelyn had asked their consent to take me under his protection; he wished to make me study, and give me a good education, and to take care of me until such time as I could work my way in the world like a man. He desired in this manner to recompense me for the act of devotion, which according to his opinion had probably saved his daughter's life.

“My parents took a long while to make me understand the full value of this favor, and to warn me against forgetting my duty, and allowing myself to be carried away by pride. They urged me always to be deeply grateful to my generous patrons; to remember they were my benefactors, and I only the poor child of peasants; to return their tender solicitude by constant application; never to be proud, to remain pure, and above all, not to forget that in the humble peasants God had given me parents that warmly loved me, and had no higher wish than to see their child happy.

“These last words from the lips of my mother

touched me deeply, and I comforted her with kisses and endearments which dispelled her fear for me.

“The very next day I was sent to the village school to learn the rudiments of reading and writing.

“M. Pavelyn sent for the schoolmaster and told him his intentions with regard to me, and promised that over and above the usual price, if he would give me his personal care, and make me advance rapidly so that I should make up for lost time, he would give him an additional gratuity.

“This teacher was a man full of energy, who wished nothing better than an opportunity to show his knowledge and good will, so that from that moment he took as much pains in teaching me as if I had been his own son.

“Each day when school was over I went to the chateau to play with Rose; for about two hours we sported about the garden, because M. Pavelyn in the interest of his daughter's health had prescribed this exercise. Then we would go to the chateau to play a new game which gave Rose more pleasure than all the rest; it was to have me seat myself in a chair and repeat the lesson of the day. The good little girl was my schoolmistress; she praised and scolded me with a seriousness which often made her mother laugh until the tears came; but there was such friendliness in her words, and such kind encouragement, that I never left the chateau in the evening without feeling a more earnest desire to improve.

“Thanks to all this encouragement, and with these means added to a naturally quick mind, I made in a short time wonderful progress, and soon began to read my mother tongue with ease.

“M. Pavelyn, whose business obliged him to go nearly every day into town, brought us when he returned all sorts of beautiful picture books; these delighted us so much that more than once it became necessary to force us out of the house that we might take the proper exercise.

“Rose had begun, too, to teach me French. At this period our country was under the dominion of the Emperor Napoleon, and it was only by a knowledge of the French language one could attain to anything in the world. While we sported in the garden, my little patroness pretended not to understand Flemish. There was forethought and generosity in this childish play, for I was compelled insensibly to learn a number of words and even sentences in French, before the school teacher considered me sufficiently advanced in Flemish to teach me the first rudiments of a foreign tongue.

“Rose not only taught me to read and understand French, but she corrected me every time I was rough, guilty of want of polish, or committed any act contrary to politeness. She told me how one should behave in good society, and what was proper and becoming, or the reverse. In a word, all she knew or thought she knew, she pointed out to me with gentle persistence. In her hands, the poor son of peasants resembled a piece of wax

which she moulded and fashioned to produce a creature who was to be her equal in his elevated tastes, the purity of his language, and his development of mind.

“Rose fulfilled so faithfully and conscientiously her character as my protectress, that Madame Pavelyn called her my little mother. It often happened when we were occupied with our books in the evening at the chateau, and that I presumed to ask anything of Madame Pavelyn, she would answer me jestingly:

“‘Your little mother will tell you; your little mother knows it well.’

“Then Rose lifted her head, and a strange pride shone in her eyes. She was so happy to bear the name of mother, and to have a child who would be beholden to her for the light of his mind, and probably the happiness of his life!

“I now knew how to talk very well and quite distinctly; the sonorousness of my voice even was praised, as well as the elegance of my language. If when I was held by the bonds that paralyzed my tongue, I had been guilty of turbulence, now I was calmer, and my temper more tranquil. Probably my assiduous studies had in a measure been the cause which produced this precocious gravity in my young mind, but mother’s daily exhortations had also contributed greatly to it. Each time I left the house to go the chateau, she repeated the same words.

“‘Do not forget, Lionel, what you are and what

your benefactors are. Continue to be sensible, upright and grateful, my child.'

"Then came the autumn, the season of the year when Rose was to leave the chateau with her parents to spend the winter in town. Before her departure she repeated twenty times her admonition that I should not forget to study and learn with resolution. If I fulfilled this wish of hers, she would love me very much, and would give me many beautiful things as a reward.

"When she was seated in the carriage that was to bear her away, and I was gazing after her with eyes full of tears, she cried out in a tone half serious, half jesting:

"'Good bye, Lionel; study well and so conduct yourself that your little mother will be pleased with you when she returns. Winter does not last forever. Make haste, and learn French thoroughly, do you hear?'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE school-master was proud of my wonderful progress, attributing it to himself; and indeed, he could not know what an important part Rose played in my improvement.

The good man held me up as an example for miles around as a proof of his wisdom and energy. And it naturally followed that he took great pleasure in teaching me, which he did with very particular care.

“I improved so much during the winter, that at the instance of my parents, I formed a class in our own house, and became the zealous teacher of my brothers and sisters.

“Spring was advancing slowly, and the trees were unfolding their first leaves. Each day, before and after the class, I went as far as the highroad to see if Rose was coming.

“How long she had been absent! The lilacs had blossomed, and were now withered. The cherries were ripening, and the chateau with its closed shutters still remained silent and solitary in the midst of the beautiful garden.

“One day in the month of June, while I was seated on a bench at the school-master’s among the other children, and was studying the lesson which had been given me, M. Pavelyn appeared sud-

denly in the midst of the class. I gave a cry, and trembling violently fixed my eyes on the door in the hope of seeing some one else come in, but was disappointed in my expectation.

“ M. Pavelyn took no notice of my agitation. He spoke for a few minutes in a low tone with the schoolmaster, and possibly asked if I had made any progress, for it became necessary that I should show him all my copy-books. I was made to read in French and in Flemish, was given a difficult sum to do, and told to point out the towns and rivers on an atlas, and M. Pavelyn himself made me write in French some lines he read aloud.

“ When I went through all these tests in a satisfactory manner, Rose’s father tapped me familiarly on the shoulder, and said, with a great deal of kindness :

“ ‘ You have studied well, my boy. I am entirely pleased with you. You have employed your time admirably, and have shown yourself grateful for your master’s care. Continue to do so. But why do you look at me so strangely? You inquire if Rose is at the chateau? I will speak about this presently.’

“ As he finished speaking he went with the master into his house, and left me in painful uncertainty. Was Rose at the chateau or not? She was perhaps ill! What was her father going to tell me about her?

“ After a few moments M. Pavelyn returned to the school-room and said :

“ ‘Come, my boy ; go with me. You have holiday this morning.’

“ I left school with him. As we walked along he told me Mme. Pavelyn had been very ailing all the winter with bronchitis. She had gone with Rose to Marseilles, the land where the olive grows, to become cured of her disease. At Marseilles Mme. Pavelyn had a brother who was established in a commercial house. Rose was to spend some months with her mother at her uncle and aunt’s. Rose also was neither strong nor well, and life in a country where the climate was so mild would not fail to do her good.

“ This is everything I took in of what M. Pavelyn was saying, but my eyes were wet with repressed tears. Rose’s father observed this, and endeavored to console me by assuring me his daughter would return before the end of the year, and I should still be able to play with her during the summer in the garden of the chateau. He said many kind things to me, encouraged me to study with all my heart, that I might soon begin my apprenticeship as a sculptor, and he pictured the splendid future which might be the reward of my industry. Then he gave me to understand he would come seldom to the chateau, and this only for a few hours ; but he allowed me permission to go every day after class, and walk there with my parents, or play with my brothers and sisters in the beautiful garden as long as it should afford me pleasure. Just now M. Pavelyn had not time to

call on my parents, but I might say to them he would certainly pay them a visit the first time he returned to Bordeghem.

“After these kind words he placed his hand on my head and said to me:

“‘Go, my boy, amuse yourself until twelve o’clock. Always be as now, sensible and studious. I will continue to be your friend, and will see that you want for nothing in the world.’

“He left me, and took a road leading to the great farm.

“With bowed head, watering with tears the dust of the road, I dragged myself as far as home, and related to my parents, with every evidence of grief, all that M. Pavelyn had told me. They tried to console me, saying that a few months would soon pass away, and I would then certainly see Rose. I finally resigned myself to this disappointment after a fashion, and applied myself with more earnestness than ever to study the elements of the French language.

M. Pavelyn came several times during the summer to the chateau to call upon my parents. He was filled with kindness for me, and even invited me twice to dine with him; but well as he treated me, his generous protection could not soften the grief I felt for Rose’s absence.

CHAPTER IX.

“ONE Sunday afternoon I was walking on the highroad about a half mile from home. Autumn was already far advanced, and the leaves were beginning to fall.

“For a month my heart had been full of sorrow, fearing I should never more see Rose. My courage had entirely forsaken me, my mind was shadowed with sadness and sorrow. I could no longer study, and the school-master took me to task every day for my strange want of attention.

“I thought but of her from morning until night, and even in my sleep I wept bitter tears. Up to this time I had put faith in my mother’s efforts to console me. I had hoped as long as the good weather lasted; but now the leaves were turning yellow, and the cold mornings foretold the approach of winter, a painful uncertainty stifled by degrees the last ray of confidence. She would not come to Bordeghem this year, and indeed, should I ever see her more?

“Such were the thoughts that ever pursued me; and though I was thoroughly convinced that in any case she could not return until the spring, there was something, perhaps a secret hope, that induced me to take long walks on the highroad, as if my soul wished to fly to meet her.

“That day I was seated on the side of the road, my back turned to a young plantation of firs, plunged in sorrowful thought, and mechanically I pulled to pieces the yellow flowers of the chrysanthemums, when suddenly the sound of carriage wheels attracted my attention. I sprang to my feet with a joyful cry of surprise. It was indeed M. Pavelyn’s carriage which was approaching—but was Rose within? Why should she be on this occasion, when the same carriage had so often come to Bordeghem without her?

“While I remained motionless, hesitating between hope and fear, the carriage passed by. I had not seen Rose. But all of a sudden the carriage window was lowered.

“‘Lionel, Lionel!’ exclaimed her soft voice, and I perceived her angelic face smiling at me, and her finger pointing to me with signs of joy.

“The carriage stopped; I approached it slowly with faltering steps, though the coachman cried out to make haste; I trembled, my heart beat violently, and all grew dark before me, as though I should succumb to my emotion; but the coachman took me up and placed me within the carriage, closing the door.

“Then I looked into Rose’s eyes, and heard her say to me joyfully:

“‘Here is your little mother returned!’ and I felt her hands press mine.

Spite of all M. and Mme. Pavelyn said to calm me, I could not overcome my agitation. They

well knew it was Rose's return that was the cause of it, and this mark of gratitude towards their daughter pleased them.

"At last Rose's kind words recalled me to myself, and through my tears a smile of happiness irradiated my face.

" 'Now Lionel, listen to what I say,' cried Rose. 'We have come to Bordeghem for you.'

"I looked at her with surprise.

" 'Yes, yes, to fetch you ; you are going to Antwerp with us ; you will live in the town, and become a sculptor—an artist.'

"M. Pavelyn explained more quietly what his intention was. He could only remain at the chateau with his family until the next day. He would speak with my parents, and arrange everything that I might go and live in town under his care. The winter course at the academy had just commenced, and I was old enough not to lose a year without beginning my art studies. As to my academic studies, he would furnish me with the means to continue them at the same time.

"I was about to become an artist, a sculptor ! I was so touched and overcome with this happy certainty that in my bewilderment I seized my benefactor's hands, I kissed them at intervals and watered them with tears of affection and gratitude.

"While he drew away his hand, counselling me with tenderness to be studious and attentive, the carriage stopped before the gate of the chateau.

“When we reached the parlor, Rose began questioning me to see how far my education had progressed. She was quite astonished to find I had gone ahead of her in several studies, but was very much pleased, however, that she was more advanced than I in the French language. She made me read and write, took me to task or praised me, according as I stood the test well or ill—in a word, she once more became the angelic protectress of the poor peasant’s son; and I, who would have been willing to be forever her slave, submitted myself to her dominion with the same humility with which a child submits to its mother. Rose spoke to me of the beautiful country where grew luxuriantly the almond and olive trees, of mountains as high as the sky, and the blue sea of Marseilles. She praised the exuberant nature of the South, its pure atmosphere and healthy and life-giving climate, and I observed, indeed, she was not so pale as before. The light brown tan with which the southern sun had suffused her face gave her an appearance of health and strength.

“In thus talking of these charming things, and of the future which was opening before me, we spent such an entirely happy evening, at least as far as I was concerned, that I had lost sight of the entire world, and only saw those two soft eyes fixed upon mine, and gathered to my heart her every word, which seemed like enchanting music.

“I was very much astonished when a servant came to say that nine o’clock had struck in the

village tower, and it was time for me to go to bed. This half day had only appeared an hour to me.

“While I played at the chateau with Rose, forgetting everything, M. and Madame Pavelyn had gone to my home, and expressed to my parents their wish to take me with them the next day to Antwerp. My mother trembled at the thought that her dearest child—the little boy admired by all on account of his pretty face and large black eyes—should go away from her forever; but Rose’s parents made her understand that such a sacrifice was necessary for my future good. At all events, it was arranged I should return every two weeks to Bordeghem, as well in winter as in summer. M. Pavelyn promised to pay my way in the stage-coach, unless when the weather was fine he brought me in his carriage. My parents were to give themselves no concern about my expenses in town, neither for my clothes or my small wants. M. Pavelyn would provide all this, and if I continued good and upright, and studied with industry, he would protect and support me until I was in a condition to make my way in the world, and assure myself an independent position.

“The next morning, when my mother had dressed me in my best suit, and had bundled up the rest of my clothes, she began silently to weep and to press me to her heart with anxious tenderness; my sisters and brothers also shed tears, and I, though happy with it all, wept and sobbed on my mother’s breast. Tears of pain and uneasiness

flowed in our home, as if our present parting were forever. My father alone did not give way to his feelings, and sought to bring us to a better understanding of the situation. He but regarded it as an especial favor from heaven—the happiness of one of his children ensured—and it seemed to him instead of weeping, we should be joyful and thank God for his goodness.

“When M. Pavelyn’s carriage stopped before our door, and the wretched moment of parting came, my mother clasped me once more to her breast, and murmured in my ear :

“‘Lionel, my dear Lionel, always love your poor mother. Let not pride make you forget you are the child of poor peasants! Respect your benefactors, and keep the fear of God before your eyes.’ She wished to say more, but her voice was choked with emotion.

“My brothers and sisters one after another gave me a good-bye kiss, and lastly my father made the sign of the cross on my brow, and blessed me with quiet solemnity.

“Then tears coursed rapidly down my cheeks, and I felt a moment of hesitation. I was ready to run to my mother, who was crying behind the door of the house with her apron before her face. I held my arms out towards her, and was about to beg I might remain with her; but my father and the servant, to shorten this painful scene, carried me to the carriage.

“The whip was cracked, and the light carriage

rolled away with such speed that in the space of a moment our house, and the village itself where I saw the light, faded from my sight.

CHAPTER X.

“M. PAVELYN had assisted one of his oldest employés, who had been his father’s warehouseman, in setting up a grocery shop. The man lived with his wife in the high street, not far from the great square at Antwerp. As they had no children, their house was much too large for them, and several rooms were unoccupied. M. Pavelyn had placed me under the care of these good people. I had two rooms for my own use, one as a bed-room, the other to write and draw in.

“All I could possibly need, clothes, books, paper, money, they were commissioned to give me as soon as I asked for them, until they received contrary orders from my patron. I ate at their table, and in the evening sat with them by their fireside.

“Master John and his wife Petronella were excellent people, and were in a quiet way most kind; they carried out, too, with great exactness, what they were asked to do for me, but took no particular interest in their lodger.

“The day after my arrival in Antwerp, a servant of M. Pavelyn’s conducted me to the academy, and a place was reserved for me.

“I was put into the class for ornamentation, and made to begin by drawing leaves at sight.

“My days were thus divided :

“In the morning after breakfast, I went to the studio of a young sculptor employed by M. Pavelyn to give me lessons, and I remained drawing decorations until the clock struck twelve, which reminded me it was time to go to dinner. In the afternoon I had two hours for my tasks in writing, and for studying my lessons. I then went to M. Pavelyn’s house to take lessons from a French professor with Rose. The rest of the day, until time for the course at the academy, we spent playing and talking, and sometimes amused ourselves with the piano. Rose, who already knew some music, tried to teach me the songs she had caught by ear. She did not care to sing; it tired her chest, and moreover her voice, though sweet and pure, was very weak. I, on the contrary, had a strong voice and sound lungs. Though through want of knowledge I sometimes sang out of tune, and drawled out my notes, as peasants have the habit of doing, Rose took pleasure in listening to my sonorous voice, or perhaps she only made me sing so often to let her protégé know she understood music. However this might be, our life, during the time we spent it together, was a paradise of sweet joys and childish happiness.

“Every two weeks I went to Bordeghem to pass Sunday and a part of Monday with my parents. My mother, who now saw I loved her as much as ever, and liked to be with her, was consoled for my absence, and rejoiced in my splendid future.

“The intermediate Sundays I dined with my benefactors, sat beside Rose at the table, and played with her until quite late in the evening.

“What my mother ceaselessly repeated to me was deeply engraven on my heart. I was always to remember the difference of rank between my patrons and myself. I should never have forgotten it, for the consciousness of this duty abided in me as a matter of faith.

“My great modesty, ardent gratitude, and real humility, found favor with M. Pavelyn, and he was never tired of repeating to all comers, that I was a child blessed with excellent dispositions. He often presented me to friends and visitors, telling them I was the son of a maker of wooden shoes, and yet he was determined to turn me into a distinguished artist. He took pride in having under his protection the son of a peasant—a poor, ignorant creature—and he wished to make of him a sculptor who would do honor to his country, by works of superior excellence. He lost no opportunity in proclaiming the end he had in view, and talking of the brilliant career he anticipated for me.

“As to Madame Pavelyn, she loved me because her child enjoyed my society, and was made happy by it.

“During this winter Rose’s mother suffered greatly with asthma, and coughed incessantly. She often talked of the land near the blue Mediterranean, saying that only the climate of Marseilles could cure her disease ; but on the other hand she would

not consent to live away from her daughter, or deprive M. Pavelyn of the society of his child.

“As winter advanced, and the damp weather set in, Madame Pavelyn’s disease made rapid progress, causing great uneasiness. Rose, constantly kept in doors, had again become very pale, and also coughed at times.

“Then M. Pavelyn took extreme measures. In spite of every objection, he determined his wife should go to Marseilles with their daughter, and remain with her brother until such time as the beneficent influence of the southern climate should have cured her weak lungs. He thought too that Rose also would derive benefit, and so as not to interrupt her studies, she should be placed at one of the best boarding-schools in Marseilles.

“As soon as this had become a fixed idea with M. Pavelyn, there was no going back from it. Rose and I cried a great deal at the thought of the long separation, but it was for her health and that of her mother; and then too, she was to return in September, and if she was well they would not go back to Marseilles, and probably spend a month in Antwerp.

“It was on the tenth of February, with eyes filled with tears, I saw a post-chaise again carrying away the light of my life.

“I lifted my hands to heaven in supplication, and ardently prayed God would restore her to health and strength.

CHAPTER XI.

“I WAS about to complete my fifteenth year, and in consequence of my unusual position in the world, I had thought much and most deeply. My mind and heart were developed to a greater degree than was usual at my age. Now that Rose was no longer here to minister to the happiness which I missed every day, all my time was spent, when not obliged to devote it to the study of art, in reading books of all kinds, which were procured for me by M. Pavelyn, or lent by my companions at the academy. When Rose went away she impressed upon me the importance of mastering the French language, so that later on I should not blush for my ignorance when mingling with the world; but this was not the only motive which impelled me to improve my mind in all possible ways. I felt a presentiment that as Rose was now studying at a very celebrated school, she would return well educated in all branches which go to form a good education. Could I allow her to look upon me as an ignorant boy who had not known how to avail himself of her father’s generous protection, to become a well informed man? There may have been lurking at the bottom of the heart of the shoemaker’s son, a secret desire to become an equal, socially at any rate, and to remain worthy of her

friendship and esteem, even when age should have widened the abyss which birth had made between herself and him.

“ I visibly progressed at the academy, and passed in a year from the class of decoration to that of figures; yet I was vexed at being obliged to remain so long a time in the class of drawing, for I had hoped if I applied myself strenuously that I should pass at the beginning of winter into the class for modeling.

“ Every two weeks, as before, I dined with M. Pavelyn, and always, at his request, took with me my finished drawings, to show my improvement. My patron was pleased, and encouraged me by testifying his good will and generosity.

“ It was thus the month of September insensibly approached. Rose was about to return.

“ Every day I was at M. Pavelyn's door to know whether any letter had arrived.

“ One afternoon M. Pavelyn sent a servant to the studio of my master sculptor to tell me to go to his house.

“ When I appeared before him he showed me, with sorrow and regret, a letter from his wife, and told me what it contained. Madame Pavelyn wrote that she did not yet feel relieved of her indisposition, and feared to return just at the beginning of winter. She thought her disease would make rapid progress, and besought her husband to allow her to remain at her brother's, at Marseilles, until the spring. It would also be better for Rose, since she was improving greatly, was happy, and growing

stronger every day. If this long absence caused him too great grief, she begged him to come to Marseilles and pay them a visit, that his mind might be diverted. It would be a great happiness to both of them, for which they would be grateful all their lives.

“M. Pavelyn was very much grieved at the contents of this letter, but finally submitted to an imperious necessity. He determined to write to his wife that his business would not permit him to leave Antwerp just at present, but would go to Marseilles at the beginning of May, to bring back Rose and her mother.

“I left my patron’s house with a heart bowed down with grief that seven or eight months were to pass away before I should be able to see Rose—a century of vain hopes and sad disappointment.

“There was nothing to do but bow to the will of God. What aided in comforting me somewhat, and in diverting my mind, was that I was beginning to model the human body in clay. I had therefore entered upon the career of a sculptor. I was not only happy in being able to carry out my natural tastes, but I worked in this class with artists of every age, whose witty conversation and gay spirits made me sometimes forget my wounded heart.

“At the end of April M. Pavelyn left Marseilles. I counted with feverish exactness the days and hours of his journey. I saw his arrival, in fancy, at Marseilles; a tear dropped when I thought of Rose’s joy as she threw her arms around her father. I could hear her ask :

“‘And Lionel, how is he?’

“Madame Pavelyn was entirely restored, her daughter had become strong and rosy. There would be no more necessity to return to Marseilles.

“But with what pain and disenchantment I was overcome when M. Pavelyn finally returned! I was on the door-step of their house at the very moment the post-chaise stopped before the door—my heart beat violently, I was pale and tremulous, my eyes had endeavored to see through the walls of the carriage. M. and Madame Pavelyn alighted—they were alone.

“I followed my benefactors into the house without finding one word with which to bid them welcome. Madame Pavelyn, seeing my pallor and emotion, told me Rose had remained at Marseilles to finish her education. A residence in that beautiful country would undoubtedly improve and strengthen her. Moreover, being the daughter of rich parents, and destined in consequence to go into high society, nowhere better than where she was could she prepare herself, by a brilliant education, to enter the world.

“To console me, Madame Pavelyn added that Rose was very anxious to return to Antwerp with her, if only once to see me; but they could not accede to her wish, because her father or mother would have had to make the long trip over again to take her back to Marseilles. M. Pavelyn was to return for her in the month of September, and she would spend her six weeks' holiday at home.

“These explanations were given me in haste, for my patrons were fatigued with their long trip which they had just made in a post-chaise, and they went up at once to their rooms to take off their travelling attire.

“I fled homeward and shut myself in my room—night overtook me with my head resting on the table, in the depths of anguish, while reviling fate.

“For several days my heart was full and my mind saddened; but by degrees I was comforted by M. Pavelyn’s kind words, and I concentrated every effort upon my studies. I was now in the class of antiquities, though not sufficiently advanced to work from my own inspirations; but the enthusiastic encomiums of my comrades, and their apparent faith in me, had filled me with zeal and confidence in the future. I now understood that art was a means of acquiring glory and a reputation in this world; I trembled with emotion at the thought that if God and nature had really intended me for a sculptor, I might almost become Rose’s equal. Such a thought filled me with inexpressible joy; but also gave me reason to tremble with fear lest this hope was born of guilty pride.

“In the summer of that year a contagious disease swept over some quarters of Antwerp; small-pox of a most virulent type carried off a great number of children, and even grown men.

“At the end of August, when M. Pavelyn was making ready to go to Marseilles for his daughter,

one of his servants was attacked with the disease. They hastily wrote to Rose that this year she could not return, on account of the contagious character of the scourge now ravaging Antwerp, which had even reached her father's house. Madame Pavelyn, owing to a prejudice which at this time was still wide-spread, ever refused to allow her daughter to be vaccinated, so that Rose, more than any one else, would be in danger of taking it.

“Once more I suffered terribly at the frustration of my hopes, at not being able to see her, whose charming image and friendly smile were ever present to me; but I too was anxious that she should run no risk at this time, so that I was rejoiced at the decision of her parents.

“Moreover I was now sixteen years old, a period when the mind assumes something of the gravity of manhood; intercourse with artists, frequently older than myself had also contributed largely in transforming the simple child into one with a more exact and juster knowledge of life.

“As Rose's prolonged absence had caused me to reflect seriously upon my position in the world, I finally came to understand perfectly that in her youth she could give her friendship to the son of a poor peasant, and even love him as a brother, but when she grew older this familiar intercourse would not accord with the conventionalities of society, and might even be injurious to her prospects. The only thing I could hope for would be that my improvement might give her pleasure, and

she would perhaps like to recall the happy hours we had passed together in our childhood.

“This is what my reason told me, though my heart refused to renounce the magnificent dream which was as light to my soul. Rose was ever in my thoughts—not the Rose of to-day, but the pretty little girl with her pale and delicate face, her blue eyes and red lips, upon which was imprinted a smile of friendliness for me.

“This memory was so dear, that by dint of dwelling on it I seemed to fall into a wild bewilderment, which made me sometimes dread Rose’s return. As she was now, she could no longer, as in the past, accord her confidence and friendship to the humble son of peasants, whose maintenance and education were at her father’s expense. And would not the actual Rose dispel for me all memory of those happy days which now lived in every heart-beat—would they not lose their enchantment and their charm?

“Yet I was sorrowful and terrified when I found towards the end of summer that Madame Pavelyn’s breathing became oppressed, and she sometimes coughed. My fears were realized—Madame Pavelyn was again going to her brother’s at Marseilles to spend the winter, so Rose also would not return home; but the following autumn her education might be considered thoroughly completed—then she would come back to Antwerp for good. If Madame Pavelyn’s lungs were not cured by this time, it would prove that the southern climate did

her no good, and she would try at home more efficacious remedies.

“I consoled myself anew as much as possible; at least I endeavored to forget or rather to soften my pain by the study of art, and the reading of good books.

“At the academy I modelled with as much ardor as courage from beautiful antique statues, that Greek art had left for our admiration. In my master’s studio I practiced carving in stone and wood, and had become quite an adept in this branch.

“I took no advantage of my benefactors’ generosity, though they had charged me not to be too economical, and to take some relaxation at times with my comrades, suitable to an artist’s life. I moderated my expenses, and avoided calling on my patrons, as if my mother’s money were sufficient for my maintenance.

“M. Pavelyn had a personal antipathy to artists, who by their negligence in dress seemed to proclaim their want of care and ignorance of polite usages. When, on the Sundays I dined with him and was seated by his side, he observed in my dress anything he did not like or he thought was beginning to grow shabby, he had it replaced at once. When added to this my regular features were taken into consideration, I much more resembled the son of a high family than the child of peasants, who possessed nothing in the world but the generosity of his patrons.

CHAPTER XII.

“Six months before, I had passed from the class of antiquities to that of modeling after nature, which was then the highest branch of study at the Antwerp academy.

“An imperious desire grew within me to essay, in the solitude of my chamber, my creative powers. Already I had fashioned in clay a hundred times the inspirations of my fancy, but it was only futile work, destined to be replaced anew by the modeling of other figures.

“This time I wanted to do conscientious work, slowly giving to it all the powers of my mind, and making it as perfect as my knowledge would now permit.

“Rose had once accepted lovingly the unfinished work of a poor child, and had awakened within his heart the sacred fire of the love of art.

“Now, the child had become a sculptor, and was confident enough of his strength to make an effort towards creating something original.

“For whom could the artist’s first work be destined, but for her who was the sole cause and only inspiration of his genius and his hopes?

“How this thought gladdened me! It so utterly blinded me that though my studies were as yet incomplete I did not doubt but that I should produce

a masterpiece; and this masterpiece, whose form was only glimmering confusedly in my mind, I loved and admired beforehand with great passion and deep faith.

“Rose was to return in two months. I could not finish my work in so short a time, but her birthday was to occur at the end of the month of January.

“This would be an occasion in which to present her with the first fruits of my labor, and I should also have sufficient time to carry out my project with the most minute care. I would speak to no one about it, not even to M. Pavelyn. My benefactor’s pleasure would be the greater were I to take them by surprise with a handsome and successful work of art.

“After pondering and reflecting a long while, after examining at least fifty subjects, and modeling as many in clay, I finally decided upon a group which was to represent *Protection*, and I succeeded, not however without much study, in settling upon a definite composition.

“On a pedestal representing turf a child, a little boy, lay asleep; his head was bowed, and the posture was as of one who needed help. His arm was leaning on the back of a sleeping lamb, the crook having fallen at his feet.

By the shepherd’s side, in a grave attitude, was another child, a little girl, whose right hand was placed in sign of protection on the little boy’s head, while the left pointed towards space, as if to say:

“‘Take courage, above there shines the star of your future.’

“I was under the influence of the memories of my youth, and the images that dwelt in my mind. This prevented me, try as I would, from following the rules of the classic school.

“My figures were neither full enough or round enough; there was a spareness in their proportions, a sort of realism of form, which was widely apart from Greek beauty, but which approached the more immaterial and poetic forms of ancient Christian art, which is mistakenly called Gothic art.

“As my work progressed, and the heads of the statues which I finished first assumed their true expression, I began to feel so much love for my work, that at times I remained entire hours in my little solitary room, perfectly immovable, chisel in hand, and eyes fixed lovingly on the face of my young protectress.

“My statue seemed to me to be endowed with life—spoke to me, and had a soul in communion with my own.

“Such folly makes you bow your head? In truth, sir, you should know by experience that the mind of the artist sometimes soars aloft, that it oversteps the bounds of reality and loses itself in the darkness of aberration, but you can readily understand what so enchanted me in my own work.

“There was in the smile that radiated from the little girl’s face upon the poor little boy, something so touching and so deeply sympathetic that I

trembled each time I contemplated the face of my statue.

“This was not astonishing, was it? The smile was the same that had illumined Rose’s face the first time she pressed the hand of the poor mute, in the humble peasant home.

“And need I add that the features of my statue were none other than those of the delicate and angelic face which was forever engraven on my heart? Oh, the years had probably changed Rose greatly! I should never see her again as she remained upon my memory; but my statue—at least my dear creation—should make her live once more before me, modest, refined, gentle and charming, as the tender friend of poor Lionel.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ON the 3d of September, 1811, towards four o'clock in the afternoon, I was working at my statue with enthusiasm, when there came a knock at my room door. A servant brought me the unexpected news of Mademoiselle Pavelyn's return, and he added that she had expressed a desire to see me without delay.

“I repressed my emotion in the presence of the servant, but as soon as he had gone down the first flight of stairs I began to jump about my room, holding up my hands and dancing and singing with joy like a child. Rose had indeed returned! After so long an absence I was to see her at last! A few moments more and I should be in her presence! This time it was no vain hope, a mere illusion, but a happy reality.

“I put on my best clothes in haste, and took pains while doing so. It would not have been polite to make Rose wait and to appear indifferent. Yet I took sufficient time to make my toilet—I wished to look as well as possible. This desire was sufficiently justified in my eyes that it was a marked day, and M. Pavelyn would be hurt if I appeared before him in careless attire; but my principal motive for foppishness was an imperious desire

to obtain Rose's approbation in whatever way I might.

"When, at the end of a quarter of an hour, I sped along the streets of the town in full dress to go to M. Pavelyn's, my impatience knew no bounds; and I had a mind to run all the way with all my might, but, on the contrary, I held back and tried to walk as slowly as possible.

"A knowlege of the world had taught me to curb my great agitation, for it suggested to me that this was not little Rose, but my benefactors' daughter, Mademoiselle Pavelyn, whom I was about to meet; it recalled me to the consciousness of my humble position, and awakened a sense of reserve. I remembered the counsels of my mother, and I resolved to moderate my joy, and to meet Rose with calm politeness until she should, by her kind reception, give me the right to express the great happiness her return had caused to spring up in my heart.

"As I neared M. Pavelyn's house, my heart beat to suffocation; impatience united with uncertainty brought the moisture to my brow, from whence it fell in beads.

"A servant was in waiting at the door; he escorted me to the drawing room, and suddenly I found myself in Rose's presence. She made one step forward, then stopped, as if quite taken by surprise, and said by way of salutation:

"'How tall you are grown, M. Lionel! I scarcely recognize you now.'

“‘Mademoiselle,’ I stammered in an unintelligible voice, ‘I thank God from the bottom of my heart that you have been permitted to return to your country safe and in good health.’

“We were facing and gazing at one another, I with pale cheeks and hollow eyes, she with much naturalness of manner, and no other sign of feeling than a gentle smile, which expressed only astonishment at the change that had taken place in my personal appearance.

“Was this Rose, that angelic child whose sweet friendship had formerly poured the light of hope and happiness into my dumb life?—whose tender grasp of the hand I still felt, whose small silvery voice still sounded in my ear, and whose blue eyes glistened as I approached her with the soft light of fraternal affection?—this young lady, already as tall as her mother, dressed with elegance, having so much dignity and striking beauty, that after a first glance I could no longer raise my eyes to hers.

“There was mingled with my agitation a feeling of regret and bitterness. I had not in truth been mistaken; the Rose whose image dwelt up to this time in my dreams existed no more; the sweet illusion of my mind had vanished forever.

“M. and Madame Pavelyn, who thought I was struck with the change in their daughter’s appearance, were amused at my embarrassment, and uttered some jesting remarks.

“‘But, M. Lionel,’ exclaimed Rose, ‘I can

scarcely control my astonishment! When I left Antwerp the last time, you were still a little boy; now, you are a man. Come, let us sit down. Relate to me something of your life during my absence. You are happy, are you not? You are still getting along well?’

“I took the chair she gave me; her voice was as soft as ever, but there was a lightness in her tone, an air of authority and patronage, which in the face of my deep emotion appeared to me as an evidence of indifference. This coldness recalled me to a memory of my position. I replied to her questions with reserve and respect; sometimes, too, with ill disguised warmth, especially when I saw the opportunity to express my gratitude and to remind her that I owed her the happiness of my life—that if ever I was successful in the pursuit of art, or should acquire any reputation, and do honor to my country, I would not forget, it was her generous bounty that had decided my fate in this world.

“Mademoiselle Pavelyn seemed to listen with pleasure not only to the testimony of my gratitude, but to everything I said. She made me speak of my studies at the academy, of the books I had read, and of the knowledge, the principles of which I had acquired by myself.

“She showed herself frankly pleased with the progress in my studies, and commended the purity and elegance of my elocution. According to her opinion, I could now go into the best society, with the certainty of never being out of place as to what concerned mind and manners.

“Her voice and her words still conveyed the same tone of patronage, which made me distinctly understand the great distance time had placed between us. She who talked to and questioned me was Mademoiselle Pavelyn, the heiress of one of the richest merchants in Antwerp: I who replied was the son of peasants, to whom the generosity of her parents had given some education and some chance of success in life. He could not, he would not be anything else, I knew that well. Yet, it bereft me of my dearest illusion, and this sudden awakening had wounded my heart deeply. Therefore all my words were spoken with sad resignation, a melancholy pain, which drew forth more than one remark from Mademoiselle Pavelyn, but which resisted all the encouragement she gave.

“She finally ended her interrogatories, and in turn began the relation of her own life in the beautiful land of olives. She described that country with so much admiration, and spoke with such enthusiasm of its wonderful nature, that she seemed to make me live beside her on the shores of the blue sea.

“Then I somewhat forgot my sorrow while listening to her enchanting words. I felt great joy when, no doubt through kindness, she recalled the pleasures of our innocent youth, the beautiful garden, the butterflies, the bridge over the pond, and even the little wooden figures which she had accepted from me with such delight. I was entirely lost to a sense of the present as I recalled those blessed

times, and it seemed to me that little Rose's angelic countenance still smiled upon me under the features of Mademoiselle Pavelyn. It was indeed the same silvery voice, somewhat more sonorous and with a more finished accent it is true, but always tender and friendly, I thought. A new hope began to loom up in my heart. Perhaps I had been mistaken; perhaps the little Rose, that dream of my soul, was only veiled under a more perfect form.

"But this consoling thought was soon put to flight by the arrival of two ladies—a mother and daughter, who had learned the arrival of Madame Pavelyn and her daughter, and could wait no longer to present their good wishes.

"I had risen, and from respect had taken a step backward. After exchanging the first salutations with Rose and her mother, the two ladies spoke to me also, in an altogether friendly manner. There was so much cordiality in their smile that they were undoubtedly mistaken as to who I was and what were my relations towards M. Pavelyn. While Rose spoke of her sojourn at Marseilles in answer to the inquiries of the ladies, they looked upon me with evident interest. The elder more particularly never took her eyes off me, and occasionally asked my opinion on the subjects spoken of. She seemed to feel sympathy for me, and even a certain amount of respect, for the smallest word that fell from my lips made her nod her head with lively approval.

"Finally she openly expressed her wish to make my acquaintance.

“ ‘ M. Wolvenaer is a statuary,’ said Rose.

“ ‘ An amateur ? ’ asked the lady.

“ ‘ No, a true artist, whose end in life is to work for the honor of his country.’

“ The old lady shrugged her shoulders, and replied with astonishment mingled with pity,

“ ‘ I was mistaken, I thought the gentleman a cousin of yours.’

“ Her daughter exclaimed, with a slightly ironical smile,

“ ‘ Ah ! the gentleman is an artist ? One would not have supposed so. How many artists there are now in Antwerp ! Day before yesterday, at M. Durch’s soiree, there were at least five or six.’

“ Mademoiselle Pavelyn saw most decidedly from the expression of my face, that the words of these ladies were displeasing to me, for she replied with emphasis,

“ ‘ This proves that good taste and the love of art are spreading more and more among the higher classes of Antwerp society. There is nothing that so elevates commerce as the protection it extends to art.’

“ ‘ Excuse us, my dear Mademoiselle Pavelyn,’ replied the lady, ‘ you misunderstood the drift of our remarks. What my daughter wished to convey was altogether in praise of the gentleman. And indeed, if all artists were distinguished and of as good a family as he, their presence would be desirable everywhere ; but you know ’—

“ These last remarks seemed to affect M. Pavelyn

disagreeably, for he interrupted the lady, and set himself to work to demonstrate with ill-concealed vexation that it was in the highest degree honorable for a man to elevate himself in society through his own efforts; and he concluded, as was his custom, by boasting that he would make of me a remarkable artist, though I was the son of one of his tenants, a poor maker of wooden shoes.

“My face grew scarlet; I clenched my teeth nervously, and felt wounded and humbled.

“A hundred times M. Pavelyn had said in the presence of his acquaintances that my father was a shoemaker. His intention was good, and he never lost an opportunity to show that he had embarked all his pride in making from a peasant's son, a well educated man and distinguished artist.

“Why then did my heart now bleed at my father's trade being mentioned? It was the first time I felt this sensation, and I was therefore deeply grieved to find within me such self love, and made a violent effort to overcome my resentment.

“M. Pavelyn's words did not produce upon these ladies the effect he expected. As soon as they learned I was only his protégé, their faces suddenly expressed indifference or something still less agreeable, and they hastened to change the subject of conversation without taking further notice of me, and behaving quite as if I were not present.

“My blood seethed in my brain, and I nearly swooned with sorrow and humiliation. What would I not have given at this moment to be a hundred

miles away from Rose! I struggled desperately with myself against this revolt of wounded pride, which even made me feel indignation towards my benefactors; but I mastered my emotion, and showed no sign of what was passing within me.

"After some moments, two gentlemen entered the apartment, and the ceremony was repeated. The thought of suffering the same thing for the second time made me shudder. Under the pretext that I was in my benefactor's way and had an engagement elsewhere, I asked M. Pavelyn's permission to retire, promising to repeat my visit the next morning.

"Permission was given me at once, for I was undoubtedly in the way; but Rose herself told me not to come the next day, as she would be out with her mother, making visits to friends and acquaintances.

"I took my hat and left the apartment, after saluting all present.

"Mademoiselle Pavelyn alone accompanied me to the door. I should no doubt have been grateful for this polite attention; but Rose's politeness was of so ceremonious a character, and her salutation of 'Au revoir, M. Wolvenaer!' sounded so coldly in my ear, that I left the house with a bewildered mind and broken heart.

"A world of thoughts crossed my brain, I felt an imperative necessity for solitude, that I might gather together and disentangle my ideas—a little more, and I should have broken down in the very street, for I had difficulty in keeping back the tears that

swelled my oppressed heart, and no sooner had opened my chamber-door than I dropped upon a chair and wept bitter tears.

“I remained a long time without moving, crushed beneath the weight of painful reflection. Finally the outpouring of my grief lightened my heart. I began to rise above my inexplicable delusion, and to accuse myself of folly.

“What had I hoped for? What did I want? Had Rose not been polite to me? What right had I to look for or expect more? The mention of my father’s trade had made me redden with shame; my heart had risen against my benefactors. It was my vanity then that had been wounded! Culpable self love had banished from my heart all idea of gratitude! My mother’s exhortations were not unreasonable. Those wise counsels had been forgotten; I was ashamed of my humble birth, and had dared to think that equality and familiarity would continue to exist between the poor protégé and the daughter of his rich patrons. Madman that I was! I too well understood matters now; between us there was not only the inequality of birth, there was also obligation—we were a world apart!

“Under the burden of these sad thoughts, I rose abruptly, and began walking up and down my room. I was afraid of myself, and beat my brow with bitterness. The proud assumption I seemed to have discovered in myself appeared to me horrible, and if tears still started from my eyes, they had

their source in a blind rage against myself. This agitation finally subsided: I then asked myself what I had done to be so severely judged. Had I not the most sincere and entire respect and gratitude for my benefactors? Did I feel it to be possible in thought or deed to be wanting in that which was owing to them? And I would cry out triumphantly with entire conviction,

“‘No, no, better to die than ever undervalue through pride or ingratitude the benefits I had received. Never! no never!’

“You smile, sir—I seize your thought: you say to yourself there might be another reason for my strong emotion, that another sentiment than that of gratitude had made me so sensitive in Rose’s presence, and rendered me so tenacious of her esteem and friendship. In a word, you think I loved Rose, and did not merely admire her as a beautiful woman. You are mistaken. If the merest shadow of such a sentiment were hidden in some of the secret recesses of my heart, as future events will show, it was at that time also unknown to myself, and influenced my thoughts so little, that in the painful examination, where I had endeavored to sound all the secrets of my emotion, I neither feared nor suspected the presence of such a sentiment.

I at last faced my position with more composure, and ended by laughing at myself for my simplicity and inexperience in creating a world for myself from memory, and living over my happy childhood, without perceiving that on every side time

had brought about realities which should have tended to dissipate the illusions of this obstinate dream.

“It was therefore natural the sudden awakening should make me suffer, but the blow could never be repeated; my eyes were opened, and for the future I would see things as they really were, with a look of assurance such as duty and reason required in a youth who was about entering upon manhood.

“After having made these reflections, I resolved with great composure of mind to conduct myself towards my benefactors as if there was no tie between us but the benefits I had received, and to accept my fate such as the goodness of God and their generosity had made it.

CHAPTER XIV.

“FROM that day Rose remained as ever friendly to me, and I had reason to be satisfied with the affection she showed; but spite of the resolution I had made to banish vain dreams, something was wanting to my happiness. A secret disquiet fell upon my mind like a pall. A sentiment of duty gave me sufficient strength to conceal from the eyes of Rose and her parents this depression which had taken possession of me, but not to overcome it altogether.

“The friendship shown me by Rose, and our conversation, did not diverge from the rules of the strictest conventionality, and she never uttered my name without prefixing the ceremonious title of M. Her speech, which was affable, was imbued with a studied politeness which would have prevented either familiarity or confidence.

“As to myself, who was condemned to respect and deference, and had made a law never to overstep them, it is easy to understand that her example imposed upon me a greater reserve than ever.

“The consequence of our respective position was that I never felt tempted to visit my benefactors, except when duty demanded it. In return, I gave up more time to my statue, which represented the true, simple, gentle little Rose, restoring to me my

sister of bygone days, my dear little mother. Most frequently two weeks would intervene between my visits to M. Pavelyn's house; for as far as possible I only went on Sundays, a day upon which for years I had always dined with my benefactors.

"After three months of this reserve, a radical change took place, little by little, almost insensibly, in Rose's behavior towards me. There was more interest in her words, more cordiality in her smile; she began, it seemed to me, to wish for my company, and appeared pleased each time I came to her father's house. She prompted her parents to impose upon me as a duty, a visit every eight days.

"A strange idea possessed her, that she wished to sing with me at the piano, and she taught me all the beautiful airs that were then in vogue. My voice, she said, was very expressive, sympathetic and appealing, which gave her pleasure. My name frequently escaped her lips without the prefix M., but each time she appeared confused with the omission, and at once corrected herself and repeated my name with the prefix required by strict politeness.

"It happened too, that I would catch her eyes fixed upon me with a strange gaze, whose depth and meaning made me shudder without knowing why. I endeavored to explain this impression, by saying to myself that this look was only such as beamed from Rose's eyes when we were children. It was therefore but a memory that disturbed me.

"If Rose was generally gay and playful when

with me, there were times when she relapsed into sadness, and in the very midst of conversation would become absorbed in strange reveries. Her parents jestingly accused her of caprice, saying that she allowed herself to indulge in silent dreams from which she would awaken only to give way to transports of joy equally singular. They fancied their daughter regretted the beautiful climate of Marseilles; but Rose, without absolutely denying this supposition, yet affirmed she had not the slightest desire to leave her native town.

“Thus the month approached which was to bring Rose’s birthday. My statue was entirely finished, and I had already taken the necessary steps to have it cast in plaster.

“When my work was sufficiently advanced for me to smooth with chisel and boasting tool the salient lines produced by the joints of the mould, my room and the staircase of the house where I lived were so full of plaster that Master John mentioned it to M. Pavelyn, and said that for several months I had worked, without scarcely eating or drinking, at a group, and even now I was making his house so dirty that six masons engaged in plastering could not render it more so.

“The account given by Master John, my landlord, of these statues, so fired M. Pavelyn’s curiosity, that he wished to find out for himself from me, what I had been working at secretly for so long a time.

“I admitted what I had been doing, and added

that I wished to make it a present to Rose as a specimen of my first work. I had concealed the intention from her, that she might be more agreeably surprised when she received the completed work, for which I hoped to receive her approbation.

“My patron was much pleased to learn that I relied upon my powers sufficiently to execute a work without the advice of teacher or friends. He appeared most anxious to be put in the way of judging for himself of the success of my efforts, and took such interest in this, my first attempt, that had it been the work of his own hands, his enthusiasm could not have been more thoroughly aroused.

“I had to promise him a visit to my studio as soon as the group should be taken from the mould and touched up somewhat.

“A few days later I took M. Pavelyn to my room and showed him the finished group, placed upon a wooden pedestal, fully lighted from the window.

“He looked at my work several minutes without saying a word. My heart was beginning to quail at the thought that this silence might be a sign of disapproval, when suddenly M. Pavelyn took my hand, pressed it earnestly and said, in words of sincere emotion:

““Lionel, you have not only created a beautiful work of art, but what is better, you are a good, an excellent boy. Ah, I am not mistaken as to the meaning of your composition! The protecting angel who hovers over the group is my daughter,

is it not? From a sentiment of delicacy you reproduced her features as they were when we bought the Chateau of Bordeghem. The likeness is striking: all that time is recalled to me. And that little boy who bows his head, who is he? You have too much humility; but having made your first creation a mark of gratitude, is an act in itself that does you honor. Lionel, I am pleased with you.'

"Then he commenced enumerating in detail the good points he thought he had discovered in my work. His affection for me most assuredly made him exaggerate his praises, for according to him I had produced a masterpiece.

"I listened, my heart beating joyfully, with tears of happiness in my eyes. How sweet and seductive is the first praise bestowed upon an artist as a guaranty of his future renown! My benefactor admired the work of my hands.

"I was truly then an artist, perhaps yet uncertain and unskilful, but still an artist.

"M. Pavelyn said he considered my composition remarkable enough to be publicly exhibited, and regretted that during the course of this year there would be no exposition. In the midst of these reflections he suddenly tapped his forehead, and cried out joyfully:

"'Oh, what a happy thought! I have it, listen. This winter I intend giving a grand fête to welcome my daughter's return, or rather to introduce her into society. Why should I not fix upon her birth-

day? In the afternoon you can present your group to her. I shall have a niche prepared by the upholsterers at the end of the large drawing-room, where your work can be placed. In the evening it will constitute the most beautiful ornament of my fête, and all my friends and acquaintances, who are the flower of Antwerp society, will appreciate and admire your talent.'

"I ventured some objections, and endeavored to make my patron understand I was too young and inexperienced at this time to subject myself to public opinion; but it was a fixed thought with him, and pleased him too much to be given up. Before leaving me he made all arrangements necessary for the exhibition of my statue, and as he went down stairs was still congratulating me, and speaking words of encouragement.

"When I re-entered my room, I lifted up my hands to heaven and thanked God for this unexpected favor.

"I remained a long time contemplating my statue, drew near to it, walked away from it, and circled around it, stammered words without meaning, and laughed and danced. In my delight, I thought indeed to have discovered in my work innumerable beauties which had first escaped me, and was not far from feeling the same admiration as M. Pavelyn.

"Finally my room became too narrow to permit me to give way to the outburst of joy which I wished to give expression to.

“I went down stairs four steps at a time, and flew into the street. My breast was heaving, I walked with head erect and the light of pride in my eyes; it seemed to me that all those I met ought to know they had seen an artist. In my almost childish excitement, I was surprised to observe most of them pass without so much as glancing towards me. Nevertheless, I felt ineffable joy, and continued my agitated walk until the hour when the evening class at the academy called me thither. My comrades found me stupid and disagreeable, because I paid no attention to what was said around me, and did not reply to their questions.

“I was too deeply engrossed in my own sweet reveries. What disturbed me was a happy secret, which I could not profane by telling to any one.

CHAPTER XV.

“THE day so ardently longed for, came at last—a few more hours and the brilliant party was to begin. My group had been carried to the house of my patron, and two workmen employed to place it on its beautiful pedestal according to my directions.

“M. Pavelyn, who was present when this was done, rubbed his hands joyfully, and evinced great impatience because, under pretext of having here and there some corrections to make, I would not allow him to go at once for his wife and daughter.

“I was a prey to mortal anguish; everything quivered within me; I could scarcely catch my breath; my throat was dry, and though I was parched from the excess of my emotion, yet a cold sweat stood out on my brow.

“This was a solemn moment. She who had made me an artist was about to gaze upon my work.

“She who was, and ever had been, the only end of all my thoughts, of my hope and my pride, she, was about to be my judge.

“Would her sentence kill all faith within me, or would it give me supernatural strength and courage?

“How striking and beautiful was my statue in the gorgeous niche where it now stood, at the lower end of the drawing-room! How well it was brought out by the background of red-brown vel-

vet, before which it was placed! How it eclipsed, with its dazzling whiteness, the splendor of the rich golden ornaments which surrounded it on all sides.

“In truth, bathed as it was in a vivid light, with the color of the red velvet curtain playing upon it, my figures appeared instinct with life; one would have said that blood circulated in their veins, and that an ethereal vapor, a mysterious fluid, a something impalpable and transparent, surrounded them. The eyes of the spectators would surely be surprised and charmed at the same time.

“There were therefore a hundred chances against one, that the first impression of my work on Rose’s mind would be favorable. What a reward! What an incentive to a glorious future!

“While I was lost in innocent admiration of my statue, M. Pavelyn dismissed the workmen, and following them, called out to me that he was going for his wife and daughter.

“I began to tremble like a culprit awaiting his judge. The sentence about to be pronounced, would it not be for life or death? Could I believe in myself, even were the whole world to applaud me, if I had not Rose’s approbation?

“I was so overcome when she appeared in the parlor, that all the blood forsook my heart, and as pale as death I was obliged to lean against a piece of furniture, not to sink under my inexplicable emotion.

“Rose approached my statue and looked at it a long while without saying a word, while M. Pavelyn

explained to her that it was a gift I begged her acceptance of, and drew his wife and daughter's attention to the features of the protecting angel, as he called it, which he said were those of a little girl whose pity had endowed the country with a distinguished artist.

"Rose appeared not to hear her father's words. She looked at my work with her large blue eyes widely open.

"I saw her breast heave, and her cheeks color with emotion.

" 'Well Rose, what do you think of this masterpiece? It seems to strike you dumb. It is good, is it not?'

"Rose gave me a searching look, a look of such depth that my heart stopped beating. It seemed to question me—but of what?

" 'Have you entirely forgotten how to talk?' said her father, laughing. 'Come, tell us what you think of Lionel's first effort.'

" 'Oh! it is too beautiful, much too beautiful!' she stammered.

"A still more vivid crimson colored her cheek; and quite confused at her emotion, she turned away from me, covering her eyes with her hands. To voice my thoughts was impossible.

"I was stupefied; my mind was in a whirl, my heart nearly leaped from my breast with happiness, and I beheld before my bewildered gaze a wreath of laurels already within reach.

"I saw the future opening out before me, and the

enthusiastic crowd with its thousands of hands applauding the artist that Rose's approbation, like the wand of a magician, had made capable of producing wonders.

"Finally we grew calmer, thanks to the bantering words of M. and Madame Pavelyn.

"Then my composition was criticised more in detail, and to add to my happiness I heard expressions of admiration escape three or four times from Rose's lips.

"She however did not speak to me, and appeared absorbed in thought; but her eyes glistened with a strange light, and each time her look fell upon me, I was moved in my inmost soul by a curious sensation.

"The time flew by with the rapidity of lightning; we had not even observed that day was declining, and twilight setting in.

"M. Pavelyn was delighted, and proud of my work, he alone talked and sketched out with satisfaction the future his patronage had prepared for me. He would not give me up until I had achieved fortune and renown. Many young artists were hampered by being obliged to work too soon for their support; but this should not be the case with me, for he would furnish me with the means, that I might only undertake real works of art.

"The arrival of the servants and workmen, who had come to light the drawing-rooms, reminded M. Pavelyn and the ladies it was time to undertake their toilets; and he advised me to go home at once, that I might also make myself ready for the evening party.

CHAPTER XVI.

"ON returning to my patron's house, I found a great number of the guests already arrived. As I entered, I was dazzled by the richness of the ladies' toilettes. All that I beheld was silk, lace and precious stones.

"I should certainly have hesitated to mingle with persons whose fortunes placed them so far above me, had not M. Pavelyn taken me by the hand, and while presenting me to the assembled guests as the author of the beautiful statue, conducted me towards my work, which was surrounded by eager admirers.

"Rose, too, had approached my statue. She seemed to enjoy even more eagerly than I the praises bestowed upon it; and each time any one exclaimed 'It is magnificent!' 'It is perfect!' joy shone in her eyes, and a sweet smile irradiated her face.

"How beautiful Rose was that day! In her crown of fair curls, blossomed roses whose calyces were formed of diamonds. Around her throat was wound a string of pearls from the Orient, reflecting their many colors. She wore a satin dress, which was silvered, and showed off her slender figure and floated after her in graceful folds; a cloud of transparent lace enveloped her like a snow-drift;

but what was most seductive and charming in her were her large blue eyes, the sweet smile parting her lips, the refinement of her delicate features, and the elegance of her queenly figure.

“Every time I looked at her I felt a thrill of admiration and respect. She produced the effect of some supernatural visitant who had appeared before me, whose beauty and majesty dazzled me. Therefore I scarcely dared to cast upon her a furtive glance, even while she sympathized so sincerely with my happiness in talking with the guests of my statue.

“Most of those present had already seen me at M. Pavelyn’s house, and knew I was his protégé.

“I therefore did not suffer in hearing him recount with the most minute details, to any one who would listen, how he had discovered in me such happy dispositions, and how thanks to his perspicacity Belgium would soon be able to claim one sculptor the more.

“When near my work, I felt sufficiently elevated not to desire a more noble origin; and even when M. Pavelyn, in the enthusiasm of his narrative, proclaimed me the son of a shoemaker, this revelation did not wound me.

“It however produced a painful impression upon Rose, for she shuddered as she heard the fatal word uttered, and the blush of annoyance or shame rose to her brow.

“The effect was not less unfavorable on the company, for an embarrassing silence succeeded to the

animated conversation which had preceded it. A good many pressed their lips together disdainfully, and I heard behind me the voice of a young lady, who whispered in her neighbor's ear:

“‘A shoemaker? So clever a young man? This is indeed a pity.’

“Insensibly the attention of the guests was turned away from my statue, and they began to move about the rooms.

“The ladies were the first to leave the ring of spectators and seat themselves on chairs placed the length of the walls.

“Only two or three gentlemen remained, talking to me about my work, and of art in general. One of them was a man of exquisite taste and profound science; he did not do as the other two had, who praised me without knowing why, and irritated me by their insufferable tone of patronage; on the contrary, he analyzed my composition before my face, divined my intentions, and to my perfect surprise found the reasons which had induced me to give my figures certain forms. Praise from his mouth filled me with pride, because I was convinced his sentiment was based on true knowledge. When he criticised certain parts of my group, it was done so delicately that his criticism elevated me in my own esteem, because it proved he considered me sufficiently of an artist to be on my guard against the pretence of an impossible perfection.

“My talk with the old gentleman lasted a long time, yet not too long for me, since it became an

inexhaustible source of encouragement to me, at the same time that it increased my love for art.

“It was therefore with great regret that I found this instructive conversation about to be interrupted by the approach of two or three people, who came to carry off the old gentleman, conducting him towards an elderly lady, by whom he seated himself without taking any further notice of me.

“Then finding myself alone, near a group of gentlemen in conversation, I permitted my eyes to wander over the vast apartment. What a profusion of silk and laces—what a sparkle of diamonds, gold and gems, adorned those ladies ranged along the wall! How charming were the faces of the young women, blossoming like fresh flowers in the spring-time of life!—though none were so beautiful as Rose Pavelyn.

“Many besides myself must have had this thought: while surrounding the other ladies there were but a few men to offer the duties of politeness, around Rose there was a complete circle of devoted cavaliers, whose assiduity was homage rendered to her charms.

“Among others, I noticed a young man remarkable for the refinement of his features, the elegance of his dress, and the grace of his manner, who more than others sought to captivate Rose’s attention.

“A cold shiver passed over me, as though the sight of the young man disquieted me. A deep sorrow invaded my mind, my heart went out to Rose with agony; I wished to be among those who spoke

words of compliment to her ; it seemed to me I had a right to obtain my share of the brightness that shone in her eyes, and the joyful smile that played about her lips, and the kind words with which she thanked her entranced adorers.

“ But all these young men were the sons of the richest houses in Antwerp, and none of them probably owned less than a million. I, on the other hand—what was I ? A poor boy, the son of a shoemaker. M. Pavelyn had just said it—and my entire fortune consisted in a feeling heart, an abiding faith in art, and hope in a glorious future.

“ I recognized perfectly that in this world of material riches, which had received me into its midst as a protégé, with a sort of pity, I was only an inferior and humble creature, and my duty forbade me implicitly to give myself the slightest importance.

“ So that I was firmly resolved to keep as far from Rose as possible, to wound no one and be in nobody’s way ; yet the thought of my shortcomings was painful to me, and more than once I bit my lips when some movement in Rose’s neighborhood, or the gestures of her admirers, made me think that they were transported by her witticisms, or the charms of her conversation.

Yet I did not dare turn my head in her direction ; perhaps they might have read on my altered countenance what was passing within me—and this notice on my part, would it not have been an insult to the daughter of my benefactors ?

“ This fear induced me to turn quite away, and

made me resolve to turn my looks to another part of the room. But I soon succumbed to the powerful influence she exercised over me, and my eyes again sought the spot where she was seated.

“By some accident, the circle composed of young men around her opened. She saw me, our eyes met. A smile of great softness, a look of joy and friendship, broke upon me; she made me a signal with her hand, of so friendly a nature and at the same time so charming, that all the young men looked at me with astonishment. The circle again closed.

“Something strange took place within me: I lifted up my head proudly, and it appeared to me I had grown taller. I drew in long breaths of air, and while joy suffused my heart, I looked around with assurance on the crowd of invited guests, as if that simple smile of Rose’s had made me prouder and richer than them all.

“Then, too, I obtained sufficient command over myself to accomplish what I considered my duty. I turned my eyes away from Rose, and resolved not to expose her to the danger of awakening perhaps in an unfavorable manner the attention of the company, by testifying her friendship for me. Her smile was enough not to make me desire further encouragement. My embarrassment had fled, and I felt quite free and light of heart.

“And then I saw I had never left my first place, and had remained standing quite near my statue as immovable as a sentinel. I proceeded to imitate

the greater portion of the company, and walked slowly across the apartment, without an appearance of vanity or too great humility.

“In a corner was seated in the midst of several other persons an old lady, who opened conversation with me, and who, after an exchange of compliments, offered me a chair beside her, that we might talk some little about art, and also of my statue, as she said.

“I was delighted to find a pretext for being seated, for I was beginning to become very weary of standing.

“The old lady was a woman of intelligence, who had travelled much and read much. She evinced great love of art, and spoke to me with lively admiration of the magnificent sculptures in Italy, the masterpieces of Michael Angelo and of Canova. She pointed out, with a sagacity which attested her true conception of art, the best portions of my statue, and expressed the belief that I was destined for a brilliant career. A beautiful young lady beside her took part in our conversation, and charmed me by the poetry of her language, and the soft inflections of her voice. She was the old lady’s younger daughter, who herself presented her to me as being an excellent musician.

“I was happy during this talk with the two ladies, and forgot—as well as they, no doubt—the distance that separated us in our respective positions in the world.

“I was thus talking for at least a half hour

without thinking of anything else, when by chance I turned my head towards Rose. The circle of young men who were around her had thinned off, and I now could see her distinctly. Her eyes were fastened on me, but there seemed to be a something sad and sorrowful in her expression. No smile broke over her face this time ; on the contrary, her lips were pressed together, as if about to say something reproachful to me, but she immediately turned away her eyes.

“I perhaps was mistaken as to the look I saw on Rose’s face. Why should she be sad in the midst of this joyful fête? She was perhaps under the dominion of one of those fits of melancholy to which she was subject. Be this as it may, I could not long think about it just then, for the sounds of the piano were heard, and a moment after the sonorous voice of a young singer resounded through the room, and irresistibly captivated my attention by its expression, so filled was it with a sentiment of delicious harmony.

“A young man succeeded the lady singer, and equally deserved the praises of the company.

“While I talked of music and singing with the ladies, I noticed that several persons, and even M. Pavelyn, begged Rose to go to the piano. She seemed to refuse. Her father came to me and asked me to join my entreaties to his, to induce Rose to sing. He thought if I would consent to sing the duet we used to sing together, she would not refuse any longer to satisfy the general wish.

"I followed my patron, and proposed to Rose that we should sing together her favorite duet. The handsome young man who had never left her side joined his entreaties to mine. Rose replied that she did not feel well, that the heat of the room had overcome her, that she was not in the humor to sing, and would be obliged to the guests if they would excuse her.

"I saw in her face a deep sadness, a look of bitterness and discouragement, which made me believe in the truth of her words; yet I still insisted, thinking that perhaps singing would dispel her sadness.

"But Rose then said to me, in tones of deep suffering:

"'It is cruel in you, sir, to persecute me in this way. Mademoiselle Pauline Van den Borge is an excellent musician. You are aware of this? Her voice is much finer than mine, and she also knows this duet. Why do you not ask her to sing with you? But have pity on me, and let me alone.'

"I was deeply affected by the sad tone of Rose's words, but M. Pavelyn did not afford me time to express my regrets; annoyed as he was by Rose's refusal, he conducted me straight to the young lady by whom I had been so long seated, and begged her to be good enough to sing the duet with me.

"I tried to excuse myself, and made some resistance, for my knowledge of music was very superficial, and I ran the risk of making myself ridiculous by betraying my ignorance; but Mademoiselle Van

den Borge was so urgent, and M. Pavelyn so insistent, that almost without knowing how I found myself at the piano by the side of the beautiful singer. To my great astonishment we got through the duet pretty well, and after the first four notes I felt stimulated by the ease and volume with which I sang. After concluding, the audience applauded us with evident satisfaction, and each one, including Mademoiselle Van den Borge, congratulated me upon the expression and purity of my voice.

“When I had conducted my companion back to her place, I approached Rose. She too, said I had sung remarkably well, better even than ever before; but then, she added, Mademoiselle Van den Borge’s voice accorded so well with mine.

“As the same sadness was still impressed upon her face, I tried to soothe her, and give her courage by telling her that her indisposition would soon be sure to pass away.

“I called a servant to bring her some refreshment, and advised her to leave the room for a few moments to get the air. She declined everything with an appearance of languor, and did not conceal the fact that the greatest favor I could do her would be to speak no more about it, and to importune her no further.

“During the interval a waltz was being played on the piano, and already several couples to whom it had been an invitation were on the floor. A good many of the young men hastened towards Rose, and were disputing the honor of the first waltz with her.

“ I felt rebuffed, and walked away slowly and pensively to the other end of the room, not to be in the way of the dancers. A great sadness entered into my soul.

“ I was not only pained to see Rose so indisposed, and obliged to refrain from dancing, but there was something in the tone given the words she spoke, of which I vainly endeavored to penetrate the meaning.

“ I remained a long time plunged in reflection, and had almost lost sight of the youths who were now enjoying themselves before me. Waltzes and quadrilles succeeded each other in rapid succession, without my being able to tell when the joyful notes of the piano ceased.

“ Old Madame Van den Borge came towards me with her daughter, and they both commenced to joke me about my sombre aspect. They informed me that they had promised to make me dance, whether I would or no. These generous souls fancied it was my humility that prevented my asking any of the ladies present to dance, and that this isolation in the midst of so large a company must embarrass and distress me.

“ Say what I would, they persisted, and I was obliged to dance with the beautiful Madameiselle Van den Borge. She herself asked me to do so, and it would have been impolite to refuse so flattering an invitation—moreover, some young men near by seemed to be amusing themselves at what they denominated my uncouthness, and want of knowledge

of the world. I therefore led Mademoiselle Van den Borge to the dance. From the place I stood in the row of dancers, I could not see Rose without intentionally turning my head.

“My heart was full, and far from finding pleasure in my partner’s charming conversation, I was terribly bored, yet through politeness did my best to hide this wretched state of mind, and I danced, at least in appearance, as gayly as the rest.

“Impelled by an irresistible desire to find out who the young man was, who without knowing it had dealt me such a deep wound, I asked my partner his name. She said he was Conrad de Somerghem, the son of a rich banker in the street of the Emperor. These details only added to my uneasiness, and made me fear I know not what danger.

“As soon as the last notes of the piano had given me freedom, and I had thanked Mademoiselle Van den Borge for the honor she had done me, I took a few steps nearer Rose. The chair she had occupied was empty, and when, after looking around me, I asked M. Pavelyn where Rose had gone, he answered me, slightly displeased:

“‘She has gone to her chamber. I do not know what is the matter with her—it is some caprice, an attack of depression. It will be over to-morrow. Act as if you had not observed my daughter’s disappearance; her absence might spoil the pleasure of the evening.’

“I wandered about for some time longer from one end of the drawing-room to the other, utterly

sad, and a prey to great disquietude, as if I had been assailed with a vague fear of some impending evil.

“Finally my heart grew so heavy amid the general gayety, that several times I begged M. Pavelyn to allow me to leave, which at last he consented to do.

“When I crossed the threshold of the door, and my foot trod the street, I heaved a deep sigh, and hurried along to escape the sounds of the fête, and to be alone with my sad thoughts.

CHAPTER XVII.

“WHEN I presented myself the next day at my benefactor’s house, to inquire after his daughter’s health, I met M. Pavelyn at the door, just ready to go out.

“He told me his daughter’s indisposition had had no results, as he had foretold. Rose appeared somewhat sad and fatigued; but she was not really ill, as I might convince myself by finding her at the piano.

“Saying this, he left the house. I opened the door of a room which was by the side of the one where Rose and her parents usually sat. The notes of the piano arrested my attention, and produced so profound an impression upon me that I stopped irresistibly to listen.

“What Rose was playing was none other than the melody of the duet that we had so often sung together. The air was lively and gay, which rejoiced the mind and banished sadness; just now, however, it rather resembled the plaint of a lost soul. The time was slow and lingering. The notes, struck without force, resounded plaintively, as if the hand of an artist deeply imbued with grief were wandering without thought over the keys.

“This strange music made me shudder. What unknown cause for grief was in Rose’s heart, that

a song of joy should, under her fingers, be transformed into a cry of sorrow?

“I opened the door and entered. Rose was alone.

“My appearance produced in her evident emotion; her brow was suffused with red, to which succeeded a deadly pallor.

“My coming had frightened her. There was a secret between herself and me. I had probably surprised, in this plaintive melody, some feeling she would like to have kept concealed.

“Mastering my impressions with effort, I spoke of her yesterday's indisposition, and expressed my joy at finding her well again. She appeared extremely embarrassed, and replied only with confused words; but she suddenly rose, and begging I would excuse her because she had something to say to the servant, rang the bell.

“I could not hear the order given in a low tone to the servant; but a moment after, Madame Pavelyn entered the room, and said, with evident anxiety,

“‘You sent for me, Rose? Do you not feel well?’

“‘The truth is, mother, I do not know—I have a violent headache, I feel very badly,’ replied Rose.

“‘Go to your room, my child; rest will restore you,’ said Madame Pavelyn.

“‘No, no, mother, it is not so grave as that,’ rejoined Rose, ‘but I beg you will remain with me!’

“Madame Pavelyn, half sorrowful, half smiling, took a chair and began speaking of her daughter's indisposition, to encourage and comfort her, telling her it was a very ordinary thing, which did not

in any way seriously affect her health. Then the conversation turned upon the evening party. Rose in her mother's presence had somewhat recovered her ease of mind. She spoke a few words in a tone I had never before noticed. She showed utter indifference when her mother spoke of my statue, and when the occasion called for it addressed me with such ceremonious politeness, that the framing of her sentences seemed to convey to me some idea that she was angry with me. The strange tones of bitterness each time she called me M. Wolvenaer were even such as to make me believe she wished to humble and wound me.

“As to myself, I suffered cruelly and would have shed tears, if deep displeasure and secret bitterness had not constrained me to restrain them. Respect for myself and the consciousness of my true position towards my benefactors, made me endure this painful trial without showing any sign of dissatisfaction or wounded pride.

“I even endeavored to find a pretext for taking my leave and shortening my visit as far as good manners would permit.

“When I was about to take my hat and go, Rose saluted me with a low bow, and while the ceremonious ‘M. Wolvenaer’ fell from her lips, she gave me a piercing look so filled with reproach that it seemed to convey to me eternal enmity.

“On finding myself in the street, I walked with bent head, not understanding what was passing around me, and utterly stupefied with the thoughts that rushed through my brain.

“ I had already been for a long while in my room, and dark thoughts were still dominant. I may perhaps have rejected the light which with a feeble glimmer occasionally reasserted itself. And in very truth there was beneath my feet a yawning gulf, which made me afraid of the light that might enable me to sound its depths.

“ Before me was the image of the young man who had never left Rose’s side during the entire fête.

“ I could see in his eyes the desire to please, and in those of Rose, and upon her lips, the flutter and smile which signified the acceptance of his attentions with delight.

“ Rose loved!—her inexplicable caprice, her dejection, her nervous susceptibility, were alone caused by her restless heart, which had succumbed to an all-absorbing passion, and struggled in vain against the ardor of a first love.

“ It was indeed true. Rose’s heart had been touched by a man, and her liking for this man was so great, and had assumed such proportions, that it had banished friendship. The love for another had arisen like an impassable barrier between herself and her unfortunate protégé; and though the memories of our past seemed to give me the right to share her affection with the new occupant of her heart, she denied me this portion, to give her soul entirely to him whom she preferred to me. Yes, she hated me; she must hate me. Had not her eyes shot forth an angry glance like a declaration of eternal enmity!

“How full of vicissitudes is man’s life, governed by cruel fate alone!

“The evening on which my first artistic work was exposed, when I reaped such eloquent praise in Rose’s presence, which was to be the starting-point of my future reputation—that evening on the contrary was to be the beginning of the misery of my life; it was to take from me all my courage and faith, cause Rose’s dislike to weigh upon me as a curse, stifle all my memories, and violently sunder my past from my future.

“It was with such thoughts as these I endeavored to deceive myself as to the true nature of my feelings and strange emotion.

“I thought I was but sad and discouraged; my eyes were dry, upon my brow there was a mortal pallor, my teeth were pressed convulsively together, and I sometimes clenched my hands with nervous agitation until it caused the knuckles to crack.

“If I could only have kept away a little while longer the light which by slow degrees invaded my mind, and finally entirely dissipated the confusion of my thoughts! But no! this was not to be; my intelligence, like a pitiless accuser, plucked the bandage from my eyes, and forced me to look into the depths of my own heart.

“A cry of horror and despair escaped me. I hid my face within my hands, and a torrent of burning tears coursed down my cheeks. No more illusions—doubt was impossible!

“I loved the daughter of my benefactor! I had

loved her long, with all the strength and ardor of a love without limit. This love, born in my childhood, had lived and waxed strong within me. It was the cause for my love for art, of my ambition and faith in the future. My poor mother! she had foreseen that her son would become guilty and unfortunate through his insensate pride! What ingratitude! The child of peasants, the son of a shoemaker, is redeemed from misery by the generosity of persons who are rich; means are given him to develop his intelligence and to win a distinguished place in the world of art—and he, in recompense of such goodness, he outrages his benefactors, he dares lift his eyes to their daughter, to their only child!

“These thoughts made me shudder, and drew from me plenteous tears. At one time I even lifted my eyes to heaven, praying God to forgive me this guilty passion, and to grant me courage to resist my weakness.

“What was my duty at this juncture? What should I do? Go and end my life in some town far away, some strange land? But how should I account to my parents and M. Pavelyn for this course? Should I become guilty in the eyes of my benefactors of a cowardly ingratitude, and carry away with me their ill will? Moreover, the academy was soon to begin its meetings. M. Pavelyn, my parents, my fellow workers even, did not doubt I would receive the first prize. This victory would decide my future, and remove many obstacles from my way.

"I could not give up the chance of carrying off the prize of honor at the academy; for if I was under the dominion of a sentiment which controlled me entirely and made me suffer cruelly, the love of art and the desire to distinguish myself before the world were still sufficiently strong not to be overcome by the fear of a great danger.

"I at last looked my position more calmly in the face.

"I loved Rose, it is true, and felt that this love would last as long as my heart should beat; but I could keep it hidden within my breast as a secret, not a sign or word giving evidence of its existence. There could then be neither ingratitude nor injury in my love for Rose, since no one in the world but myself would know what sentiment had pervaded my soul.

"I shuddered at the thought, that possibly in Rose's presence I might lose the mastery of myself, and betray involuntarily the emotions of my heart. But then, I said to myself, Rose hated me, and I rejoiced as I thought that this hostile attitude would give me the strength to hide my secret with pious care. I would assume a steady attitude of respect; I would be reserved, prudent, and simply polite, and thus avoid every occasion of awakening the slightest suspicion in Rose's mind, or any one else's.

"If I could faithfully accomplish this purpose, there would not be much danger in the sentiment I felt. And I might perhaps obtain the strength,

through my determined will and her aversion for me, to get the better of this wild love.

“For some moments I smiled at the thought and was partly consoled, but insensibly I sunk into dumb and utter despair. The magic veil which since the period of my infancy had surrounded my life, was utterly rent! Rose hated me!

CHAPTER XVIII.

“TWELVE days elapsed before I dared risk presenting myself at M. Pavelyn’s house ; in the interval my landlord told me more than once that Rose was not ill.

“I could therefore not put off my visit any longer, without having to make an excuse for my absence, since the Sunday when I was to dine with my patrons had now come.

“I went with design to M. Pavelyn’s at the hour they were in the habit of seating themselves at the table.

“I therefore found all the family collected. Rose was very sad, yet I saw no signs of displeasure about her, only an extreme coldness, and a certain affectation in not directly speaking to me. She evidently avoided having any conversation with me, and most frequently kept her eyes lowered or else fastened on her mother. Setting this aside, she seemed in no wise embarrassed, and talked with her usual freedom of mind. She uttered my name but once, but the ceremonious formula of M. Wolvenaer was not uttered with such bitterness as the last time I had heard it from her lips.

“It followed as a matter of course that I could do nothing to keep up the flagging conversation, nor could I utter jokes and witticisms. I did my

best to appear in good spirits, but every moment my thoughts wandered, and I relapsed into deep melancholy.

“M. Pavelyn complained of us both : as for Rose, he could excuse it in her, for she was not at all well, as her pallid countenance must show ; but I, who had no reason for being sad and out of sorts—I did wrong, he said, to increase by my silence his daughter’s depression, instead of raising her spirits by my animated conversation.

“When dinner was over M. Pavelyn wished to make me sing with Rose, under the pretext that nothing brightens one’s spirits like singing, but Rose refused to go to the piano ; she even seemed afraid of music, for when, to please M. Pavelyn, I was about to sing—very much against my will—Rose asserted she was unable to endure the sound of my voice, or the tones of the piano ; she had a headache, she said, and her agitated nerves were unduly excited. After doing his best to restore Rose’s good humor, M. Pavelyn saw that his task remained unsuccessful ; he called the servant with ill-disguised displeasure, and ordered him to bring forward the card table, begging me to play a game of chess with him, as we were in the habit of doing every Sunday, though much later in the evening.

“We had scarcely commenced playing when Madame Pavelyn announced to us that to please Rose, they would take a walk for the sake of enjoying the air, and would call at the banker’s as they

went along the street of the Emperor, to give Rose an opportunity of seeing her friend Emily; they might therefore be detained, and they begged if they were late M. Pavelyn would send the carriage for them.

“While seated before the chess-board apparently calculating the chances of the game, I was thinking of Rose’s departure. She was going to the street of the Emperor, into the very house where lived the young man who had robbed me of her affections forever. She would spend a part of the day in the society of Conrad de Somerghem. The thought that her departure had no other end than to humble me, wounded me deeply. She was about to take a walk in cold and disagreeable weather, because she did not wish to be where I was. She had conceived such an aversion for me, that she could not endure my presence! Hate could not be shown more openly.

“Disturbed by these thoughts, I played like an ignorant child. M. Pavelyn at first laughed at my absent-mindedness; but when I committed the second misplay, he became impatient, and reproached me for my inattention with a severity that recalled me to a sense of duty; after this I made a desperate effort to concentrate all my attention on the game.

“By good luck I won the first one, but lost the second and third.

“We gave up playing; the shortness of the winter days brought night very early, and it was growing dark in the room.

“M. Pavelyn drew his chair up to the fire, and began conversing with me about one thing and another.

“He spoke of the approaching meeting at the academy, and begged I would make every effort to obtain the gold medal. According to his opinion, the reward of honor must necessarily be mine; yet he did not think it well to confide too blindly in my success. He therefore adjured me to leave nothing undone to come forth victorious from the struggle; he besought me to give him this satisfaction as a mark of my gratitude, and as a reward for all he had done for me since my childhood.

“I was deeply touched with the friendly interest my benefactor expressed in me, and promised to carry away the palm, as he desired, even if I had to attempt impossibilities.

“We spoke also of Rose. He regretted the inexplicable sadness which for some time had darkened her mind, and even threatened to undermine her health. Four times during the past eight days her mother had surprised her in the solitude of her chamber, with her eyes full of tears; she was always moping, and though gentle and quiet, was sullen and out of humor with every one. She had been urged to say whether there was anything she desired, but replied that there was absolutely nothing she wanted, and thought a nervous indisposition was the sole cause for her discomfort and obstinate depression of spirits.

“M. Pavelyn was not without anxiety. He knew

that in her early childhood his daughter's health had been very delicate, and even now she had no strength to lose. He said as soon as he could he should go to Brussels, to consult a celebrated physician about Rose, but did not wish to say anything about it to her, nor to call in any one of the town physicians, for fear of frightening both her mother and herself.

“When he had exhausted this subject I asked my patron's leave to go ; he had already said he meant to join his wife and daughter if they had not come in at twilight. He grasped my hand, and in token of farewell addressed still a few more words of encouragement to me, urging me to do all I could in the approaching competition at the academy.

CHAPTER XIX.

“FROM this time Rose’s manner to me remained unchanged ; she was equally cold, and seized every opportunity to leave the room when I visited her parents. But she never forgot the rules of politeness, and seemed after a while to be able to conceal the feeling of dislike she had against me—so that when she was obliged to speak to me, she did it with very great amiability, though it was only through politeness. I could not be mistaken as to the distaste she had conceived towards me.

“She was habitually very pale, and grew thinner day by day. Her parents, who had her always under their eyes, did not perhaps notice that her cheeks were losing their roundness ; but I, who only went to her father’s once in a fortnight, observed readily the effects of the love born in her heart the fatal day of the evening party, which had poisoned my entire life.

“No, fate is not just, and there is not, as people say, a compensation for every contrariety of human existence. How happy and supreme was he whose image reigned in Rose’s heart ! how fortunate should the man esteem himself who was chosen by her as the object of her pure and ardent love ! To occupy his place I should, I think, have renounced all that was dearest to me in the world, every hope,

even my art! I was not only crushed beneath the weight of her dislike, not only did I see her dying of love for another; but I, humble creature that I was, could not even lift my eyes to hers from the depths of my inferiority. The jealousy that consumed me was a guilty passion, and though I was resolved to take my secret to the grave, though no one on earth should know the cruel wound which was bleeding in my heart, though her dislike interdicted all hope; in the deepest depths of my soul I could not stifle the love, whose impenetrable secrecy I kept, and that the law of the world, gratitude for benefits received, commanded me to pluck from my heart. My life had become a terrible warfare, a deadly struggle against inimical thoughts.

"I soon relapsed into sombre uncertainty. I seemed to hate myself, and frequently, when alone, thinking of my impotence and cowardliness, I struck my forehead with vehemence, as if exercising a just revenge.

"Oh, I was unhappy, more unhappy than any one could suppose. Rose had been the only end of my life. To lose her affection was for me to die.

"I believed, however, I should finally triumph over my weakness, and time would heal my heart-wound. My useless struggles sapped my strength; I grew thin, and felt a presentiment of approaching illness.

"At my patron's I explained my pallor as being caused by constant study to prepare for the competition at the academy, and I partly told the truth.

“ M. Pavelyn advised me to moderate my enthusiasm, and Rose herself, probably through a remnant of pity, endeavored also to make me understand that I could not trifle with my health.

“ Finally the meetings at the academy opened, beginning with the inferior competitions, such as composition, expression, perspective, and anatomy, in which I no longer took part, because the year before I had obtained the first or second places in these different branches. The gold medal and crown of honor in the class of sculpture was the prize for competition in modelling after nature ; it was the last given, and the trial would continue for six days.

“ The approach of this decisive struggle, the uncertainty of success, in spite of my ardent efforts, the sorrow which was eating out my heart—all broke down my strength and made me falter.

“ It was the morning of the day fixed upon for the beginning of the examinations in modelling after nature ; they were to commence at six o'clock in the evening, the competitors were to devote two hours for six evenings to the reproduction of each model. Eighteen or twenty days therefore would be required for the prescribed proofs.

“ In my anxiety not to neglect anything, and to call to my aid all that leads to success, I was seated at a very early hour in my room making my studies from a little anatomical figure of the human form. Insensibly a strange sensation of numbness spread over my limbs, I felt a terrible pain in my head,

and nervous chills shook me from head to foot. At first I could not comprehend what was happening to me; I feared my presentiment of a long and dangerous illness was about to be realized, which would keep me in bed some time.

“I should then not be able to take part in the competition, and should see the gold medal escape me.

“I felt that I was suffering with fever, which at this time was very prevalent in Antwerp. It was but a fever!—perhaps this indisposition would not prevent my being a competitor for the grand prize. The thought soothed my anxiety, and I went to bed more than half consoled.

“The fever took its usual course. After a full hour of cold chills, the heat of reaction made my blood boil and head ache until I finally succumbed to the rest of exhaustion, and knew the attack had passed away for the time.

“Just then my landlady’s voice was heard, announcing that dinner was served.

“I replied I had no desire for food, that they would do me a great kindness in making me some tea, and keeping my dinner hot.

“I succeeded in making her think there was nothing serious about my illness. She brought me the refreshing drink, adding that dinner would be ready at any hour I wished; she then left me in peace.

“Though my sense of fatigue was great, and I was scarcely able to resist the sleepiness I felt, I

rose and dressed myself. As the day advanced I felt my strength return, and at nightfall went to the academy, where I began with great courage and almost with joy to model after a living figure. It seemed to me my eyes were not very clear, and that fever had left some little confusion in my brain; but I overcame this annoyance by the force of will, and when the two hours had elapsed I returned home quite pleased with my work.

“The fever let me alone for a day, then returned at almost the same hour.

“I concealed as much as possible the gravity of my illness from Master John and his wife, and begged them not to speak of it to my patrons, that I might give them no unnecessary anxiety.

“I continued to hope that the fever would abate after one or two attacks, and I feared that perhaps if M. Pavelyn knew I was ill, he might prevent my taking part in the competition at the academy.

“When I had suffered in this way from five or six attacks, and I was perceptibly thinner, as much from my sickness as from my work, Master John told me he could no longer conceal my state from M. Pavelyn.

“I quieted him by saying I would go the next day to my benefactors, and tell them all about it.

“The next day I presented myself at M. Pavelyn’s house. He gave a cry of astonishment when he saw my pale face and sunken cheeks. Rose looked at me at first with a strange look, sad and bitter like a reproach; then she suddenly bowed her head,

and if I had not been sure of her dislike for me, I might have thought the traces of sickness on my countenance had struck her deeply.

“I explained the reason for my becoming thinner, and spoke of the fever as of no importance—a thing that would pass of itself as soon as the conclusion of the competition at the academy would permit of my having the necessary rest. M. Pavelyn was truly sympathetic; he praised my great courage, but laid too much stress upon my triumph to tell me to draw back from the competition.

“Rose’s manner at this time astonished me. She endeavored to make me understand I was very wrong thus to sacrifice my health for an uncertain hope of victory, which I could do very well without.

“I was, she thought, a sufficiently great artist to open out a brilliant way for myself without needing this present success; and as her father, and I especially, endeavored to combat these opinions, she became quite angry; bitterness and increasing displeasure were to be observed in her words, until finally, not being able to control her nervous agitation, she left the apartment, her face hidden in her hands, and went and shut herself up in her own room. Her mother followed her in silence.

“I was altogether cast down, and did not know any longer how to act. Though Rose had shown signs of aversion to me and would not endure anything from me, my heart was deeply pained to see that her nervous system was utterly shaken, and she was overcome with sickly sensibility.

“ I had detected in the sound of her voice an inexplicable tone of pained impatience, a something plaintive and desperate, which had alarmed me.

“ M. Pavelyn tried to reassure me, saying that Rose’s temper and excitement should not surprise me, as it was only caused by her nervous agitation; the next day she would ask to be forgiven, as usual, and realize how wrong she had been.

“ According to my patron, I should not retire from the contest unless I felt my powerlessness. He however, left me entire freedom—but, as in spite of the fever, I had already attended the meetings for the space of ten days, there was no reason to suppose I could not go on to the end.

“ M. Pavelyn promised besides to send me an excellent physician, who would decide at any rate whether my participation in the contest would be injurious to me.

“ I returned home, my mind filled with sad thoughts, but firmly determined to follow the contest to the end, even if the physician himself forbade me so to do. My triumph would be for my patron a reward for his benefits. When my name was proclaimed throughout the town as that of an artist for whom a glorious future was opening, then perhaps the son of the shoemaker might rise somewhat from his humble inferiority—mad thought that disquieted me! But he was rich and well thought of in the world—he who had wrested from me the light of my life.

CHAPTER XX.

“ I HAD not been more than an hour in my room when the doctor came.

“ After some questions about the duration of my indisposition, he said there was a good deal of malignant fever in Antwerp, though it was not the season for fevers; yet he thought he might say that in about ten days my indisposition would have disappeared. He prescribed a mixture of quinine and bitter roots, which he praised as an almost infallible remedy against the low ground of Antwerp. He promised to return, though he thought it unnecessary; but it was the wish of M. Pavelyn, who had sent him to cure me.

“ The next was my fever day. In the morning at a very early hour the wife of Master John went up and down stairs under every imaginable pretext. She brought to my bedside sweetmeats and syrups, asked me tenderly if I felt well, and showed me such interest that I could not understand how this old woman, who was generally so indifferent, had suddenly become as interested in my suffering as a mother at the bedside of her sick son.

“ During four days my surprise increased on account of the care with which I was surrounded by Dame Petronilla, which was truly astonishing. Nothing was good enough for me. The floor I

trod upon was too rough for my feet; the good woman, against my wishes, had covered the floor of my studio with all the pieces of carpet she could lay her hands on. All day she came to see if I kept my fire well up in the stove, and if there was the smallest crack in window or door, she stuffed it up hermetically to protect me from currents of air.

“By dint of persistence in knowing the reason for this unlooked for care, I at last loosened Dame Petronilla’s tongue.

“Rose, Rose had begged her with her eyes filled with tears, to take care of me as a mother cares for her child! So that in spite of her love for another, her heart had kept a pitying spot for the sufferings of her childhood’s friend!

“This thought overwhelmed me with joy, and induced me to smile for at least half a day. But, insensibly, I fought against the wild hope that possessed me, and I persuaded myself that the happy dream where my mind wandered was but a vain illusion.

“That Rose should be sorry for my illness was but natural. I had never doubted the fact of her goodness and generosity of heart. But could I suppose she would return my affection now that another whom she loved had come between us? However this might be, in spite of my efforts to become disenchanted, and though the name of Conrad de Somerghem resounded ever in my ears, the old woman’s confidences left me sweet uncertainty and great comfort.

“The remedies the physician had prescribed for me did not lessen the fever. On the contrary, the disease seemed to become more violent from their effects, and yet the doctor predicted an early recovery, because the last attacks of fever had come later than usual, and lasted two hours less time.

“I went every day to the academy, and worked with an ardor and passion which probably contributed greatly to aggravate my disease and exhaust my strength. Happily, until now the attacks of fever had begun early enough in the day to allow of my getting a little rest and quiet of mind before the time when I was due at the academy. Finally my exhaustion was so great, and the wanness of my cheeks so striking, that I drew back with alarm each time I saw myself in the glass.

“I could no longer conceal my indisposition from my parents, and moreover I felt a great desire to see my mother.

“I wrote to her in a very hopeful tone that I had some little fever, and could not go the following Sunday to Bordeghem, as I had promised her, not so much on account of my indisposition as because the contest at the academy tried me very much. I quieted her fears as much as possible, by begging her to come on Sunday to see me at Antwerp, and adding that I would be very grateful to her for this mark of affection.

“I wrote this letter on a Friday; she would therefore receive it on Saturday at midday, in sufficient time to make arrangements for coming to town on Sunday.

“On Saturday the third trial between the contestants was to take place. Owing to my enfeebled strength, I had remained somewhat behindhand, and was obliged during these last two hours to work without ceasing, that I might finish a third competition.

“It was my day for fever; this made me uneasy, as I knew from experience that after one of these attacks my intelligence was not as great nor my mind as clear as usual.

“To my great astonishment, the entire day passed without my having fever; and when night came on, as I was preparing to go to the academy, I jumped for joy at the certainty that I could put my last touch to my work with the full force of my powers.

“But hardly had I taken off my working clothes to wash my face and hands, than I was seized with a chill that ran down my spine like a stream of cold water.

“I saw how it was—fever had now set in.

“Aggravated by my alarm, the attack showed itself in full force.

“I felt my lips begin to tremble. Should I allow myself to be stricken down by illness, and forego the triumph I had so ardently desired? Should I succumb just as I was about to pluck the laurel wreath? No, no; I must keep on struggling, even if death overtook me.

“Maddened with excitement, I dressed myself as well as I could, ran down stairs, and rushed into the street. Happily, it was nearly dark.

“I could therefore escape the observation of the passers by. How astonished they would have been if in broad daylight they had seen a young man with the pallor of death upon his brow, teeth chattering, staggering as if he were drunk, holding on to the fastenings of the windows with trembling hands, and dragging himself along the houses as if about to fall into a dead faint.

“I reached the academy, however, just as the contestants were about to place themselves around the living model. My condition inspired them with great interest; they all came to me and begged me warmly to return home. They would even, they said, unite together to sign a petition for the judges of the contest to regard my unfinished work as if it were done.

“I was extremely touched with this mark of generosity and real affection, but rejected all their advice, even that of the professors, and took my place to begin my work, though my hands found difficulty in holding the chisel.

“Man’s will is a power without limit. I made such an effort over myself that I conquered the chills that anticipated the fever, and spite of my bewilderment and confusion of mind, I worked so well that I had finished when the academy clock struck eight, the hour when the contest was to be closed. But then my nerves gave way, and the fever set in with unlooked-for violence. Everything before me became dark, I leaned against a bench, and was near falling on the ground for want of strength.

“Two of my comrades lifted me in their arms, and followed by five or six others who pitied me with tender compassion, they conducted me home, and only left me when I was in bed.

CHAPTER XXI.

“DAME PETRONILLA watched by my bedside until the attack had entirely passed away; then, having reassured her as to my condition, I exacted that she should go to rest. Her room was only divided from mine by a thin partition; if I wanted anything I was to knock for her.

“She had scarcely left me when I fell into a deep sleep, which was very much disturbed all night by a thousand frightful dreams.

“I was in a magnificent temple resounding with the chants of the priests, and chords of the sweetest music, and clouds of incense filled the sacred spot.

“I suffered a cruel martyrdom, and wept bitter tears, for before the altar knelt a young woman whose head was encircled with a marriage wreath, and by her side was a young man dressed as a bridegroom.

“How my heart stood still with horror and despair, when the fatal ‘*Yes*’ fell from Rose’s lips, and the priest’s blessing linked her forever to the enemy of my happiness.

“Yet when she left the altar and passed before me on her husband’s arm, I gave her a sorrowful look, my soul implored some pity for my mortal agony; but Rose cast upon me a look of hatred, and her husband one of triumphant disdain.

"A cry of anguish escaped from me, and re-echoed in the temple—and I awakened to find my brow wet with agony.

"When again I became drowsy, and my eyes closed, I was in M. Pavelyn's house. It was the day on which the judges of the contest were to assemble, and we were awaiting their sentence with confidence. All of a sudden the beadle of the academy appeared; joyful acclamations salute him, and anticipate the announcement of my triumph; but he makes it known that another contestant has deserved the prize, and I have only secured the tenth place.

"My patron accuses me of neglect and presumption, and withdraws from me his protection. Rose asserts that there can no longer be anything in common between her and a man who has neither sufficient courage nor sufficient genius to elevate himself to her level by the power of his art. With head lowered, heart-broken, and dying with shame, I leave the house of those who were my benefactors. They drive me away. Their sentence: 'You are not an artist,' resounds in my ear as a malediction.

"It required more than an hour to overcome the painful impression that this vision had produced. Yet I ended by again going to sleep; when my imagination transported me to my native village. How my parents had discovered my heart's secret, I knew not; but I saw my father's eyes inflamed with anger, and my mother's cheeks wet with tears. Each one reproached me with the foolish pride

which had led me on to the most cowardly ingratitude.

“I had dared lift my eyes to my patron’s daughter, had dissipated all the strength of my soul in hugging this guilty passion to my heart, and in consequence failed in the object which had procured me these benefits. God had punished me by withdrawing the light of intelligence and the fire of genius. My mother complained in bitter tones that I had made her miserable, and my father, carried away by furious passion, cursed me.

“What a night, alas! filled with frightful visions and presaging sorrow, the slightest possibility of which made me tremble in broad daylight.

“I dreaded sleep, which each time plunged me into these dreams, and I made painful efforts to keep my eyes open; but after a long struggle my strength gave way, I succumbed once more, and being overcome allowed my heavy head to fall upon my pillow.

“No doubt my mind had exhausted the range of spectres which had power to alarm me, for from this time my sleep was quiet and unbroken by dreams; and when I was awakened very late in the morning by the noise that Dame Petronilla made in my room, I did not feel very ill, but was extremely tired, and my mind remained clouded with a great sorrow.

“When I had taken two cups of tea, and appeased the grumbling of my stomach by eating some pieces of bread, I tried once more to sleep;

but just then the door opened, and my mother, who had left her village at daybreak, entered my room.

“Tears gushed from her eyes, she took me in her arms, and with a cry of fear and sorrow she but interrupted her kisses to chide me for not having sooner apprised her of my illness. My emaciation and pallor startled her, causing her to weep abundantly each time she raised her eyes to gaze at me.

“I embraced her with infinite gratitude, and endeavored to make her understand that there was nothing the matter with me but fever; that this fever while causing the patient to lose flesh for a time, was neither dangerous nor difficult to cure; that indeed I should have been well long before, but that the contest at the academy had agitated and tried me beyond measure. To dissipate her fears and console her, I assumed great gayety, pretended to laugh and joke, that she might see she was wrong in giving herself so much uneasiness about me.

“My mother at first resisted all my efforts, but by degrees was re-assured and her tears ceased to flow. We then began talking more freely about different matters, of the hope I felt of coming forth from the contest triumphantly, of my father, my sisters, M. Pavelyn and Rose.

“As my mother’s sadness decreased, my melancholy increased. I no longer felt the need of being gay; and moreover the conversation touching upon Rose re-opened my heart’s wound, and filled my mind with uncontrollable sadness. My mother con-

cluded that my vague regrets and reticence concealed from her some important matter.

“I could no longer resist her tender entreaties, and ended by acknowledging the true cause of my sorrow, and probably of my sickness. I told her that for some time past Rose felt for me inexplicable hatred, and avoided me; that she only spoke to me with bitterness, and often wilfully humbled me.

“I did not dare avow to her that my heart was devoured with a secret love, for I felt ashamed of this guilty passion, and I knew the slightest suspicion of such an error would have made her desperate; but I recalled to her with warmth, that Rose had sheltered me in my childhood with her friendly protection, and was the sole cause of all the events that had altered my life. That her dislike made me unhappy, my mother could scarcely doubt. I thought, and it was not to be wondered at, that this hatred united with other causes of disquiet had harassed my mind and made me ill.

“My good mother shook her head incredulously, and even smiled as she listened to my explanation; she treated my sorrow as a foolish fancy, without foundation. Probably unawares, I had given Rose some cause for this fleeting displeasure, but my mother asserted that she had reasons there was no gainsaying for thinking that Mademoiselle Pavelyn felt for me the same interest as before. Only five weeks had elapsed since on a bright sunny day she had gone to Bordeghem with her mother.

“I knew this. I had noted with great pain

Mademoiselle Pavelyn's never mentioning the trip to me, and Madame Pavelyn herself having brought me the good wishes from my parents.

"My mother told me with joyful enthusiasm that Rose, instead of making use of the beautiful weather, had spent all that day with her, and shown her more friendship and affection than ever before; that she had talked of me a hundred times, of my noble disposition, of the brilliant future that awaited me, and the pleasure she felt in knowing she had contributed somewhat to assure me a happy fate in life. Yes, Rose had confessed that every night she sent up an ardent prayer to Heaven for my success in the academy contest.

"I listened astonished. My mother's voice sounded as soft as some enchanting music, and my heart beat violently as I heard her story; but it was only a momentary illusion, for no sooner had she ceased speaking than the image of a proud and handsome man rose up before me, and the fatal truth again impressed itself upon my mind.

"I confided to my mother that for some little time a warm impression had been made on Rose's heart by a young man of high birth and large fortune, that love had stifled friendship, and that without my knowing why, she had begun to hate me from the time another warmer and stronger sentiment was awakening in her heart. To confirm this opinion, I related all that had happened to me since then—how Rose always spoke bitterly and peevishly to me; how she wounded me intentionally, and

seized every pretext to leave home each time I went to her house.

“I related all this in so sorrowful a tone, laying such stress on the details which proved Rose’s aversion to me, that my mother began to have misgivings as to what to think. She even believed my fears might be well founded, and consoled me as well as she could, by making me hope it was Rose’s delicate health that was the cause of the want of friendliness she evinced—a matter which seemed to her quite certain, since M. and Madame Pavelyn also complained of their daughter’s sadness; moreover, she recalled to me that I was a man, and there could no longer be the same confidence between Mademoiselle Pavelyn and myself as when we were both simple children.

“When my mother had spent some hours near my bedside, she rose and said she could not return to Bordeghem without presenting her respects to M. and Madame Pavelyn. She would still remain a portion of the morning with me, but hoped if she could see Rose and speak to her, she would learn that what I complained of was purely imaginary, if not all, at least in part. If this was so, she would bring me back this comfort with great pleasure, and at all events return to chat with me a little while longer.

“As soon as my mother left, strange thoughts took possession of me. Rose on her last visit to Bordeghem had overwhelmed my mother with proofs of affection which were almost filial in their

character. She had spoken enthusiastically of my future, of the nobility of my disposition, and added that every night she prayed God I might be victor in the contest.

“ I no longer remembered at what time Rose had gone to Bordeghem, as long as my mother remained with me. I had tried to prove there were reasons for believing in Rose’s dislike of me; but now that I was alone I began searching my memory and computed so exactly the days and events, that I reached an unexpected conclusion, which caused me to sit up in bed with a cry of joyful uncertainty. Had I been mistaken? Could it be possible? How could I resist the evidences in the matter? While Rose in my mother’s presence showed for me such warm affection and interest, the fatal evening party had already taken place nine days. What must I think? Had love ceded a large place in her heart to friendship? Had the sorrow I felt only been a bad dream? But then, how, should I explain her conduct towards me? Oh no, no, I could not let this deceptive hope gain admittance into my heart. Had I not myself seen Rose’s eyes flash upon me with looks of hatred? Did not her voice, when she spoke, betray ill will and bitterness and even something of disdain? And yet, why should she who was honesty itself have gone uselessly to deceive my poor mother.

“ For a long while my timid mind oscillated between joy and uneasiness, pain and hope, until again I heard my mother’s step upon the stairs.

“She opened the door quietly and entered, thinking probably I was half asleep. A veil of sadness covered her face, and I saw from her mournful look that she was deeply afflicted.

“‘Is it not true, mother, is it not true?’ I asked with bitter despair, ‘that I was right? You also are now convinced that Rose hates me?’

“She shook her head negatively, and heaved a deep sigh.

“I took her hand and tried to dispel the sadness by exhorting her to patience; the loss of her affection who up to this time had been my life’s providence, must necessarily grieve me for a while; but in the end man becomes accustomed to his fate, however painful it may be, and I should also by degrees become consoled.

“My mother, without reply, began to cry; her tears coursed silently down her cheeks like pearls.

“‘It is even worse than I thought, is it not?’ I said. ‘Possibly your love for me has exaggerated the evil you have discovered; but do not weep, mother, I shall find strength to rise above my sorrow. We have at least this consolation; I have done nothing to merit Mademoiselle Pavelyn’s dislike.’

“My mother placed her hand on my mouth, and cried, with anguish:

“‘Hush, Lionel, hush; you blaspheme!’

“I looked at her with astonishment, and asked, stammering, the meaning of these extraordinary words.

“She appeared to dread the explanation I begged for, and remained silent for a moment, looking at me with eyes so full of compassion, that I began to tremble beneath her gaze.

“She finally replied to my reiterated request, that I should know the cause of her tears.

“‘Oh, Lionel, would to God Rose hated you!—my mother’s heart would not now be torn asunder with the fear of some terrible misfortune. How is it possible you yourself could have been deceived? Must it be your mother who tears the bandage from your eyes? Alas, I dare not! And yet it is my duty to show you the danger which threatens you.’

“‘What do you mean? In what sense am I to understand your words, mother?’ I cried. ‘Speak, speak—you make me shudder! A terrible misfortune!’

“My mother heaved a stifled sigh; she struggled visibly against making the disclosure I asked for.

“At last she placed her lips quite near my ear and replied while still weeping.

“‘Lionel my poor son, a great misfortune threatens you! You think Rose hates you since her heart has been touched by love.’

“And lowering her voice still more, she muttered in an unintelligible manner:

“‘If it be true she has love for any one, if it be a man, it is assuredly no one but—’

“‘But whom?’ I cried trembling with fear and hope.

“ ‘No one but yourself, my unfortunate child.’

“ It almost appeared as if this revelation had suspended my life for a moment; I did not speak, I did not breathe, I kept my eyes closed to give myself entirely up to the bewildering thoughts with which this news filled my brain.

“ When I opened my eyes, my mother’s face was hidden in her hands, and she wept silently. I gathered up all my strength of mind and made a great effort over myself to get the better of my agitation.

“ ‘Mother, beloved mother!’ I said, ‘you are assuredly mistaken. What you think is impossible. Have you seen Rose?’

“ ‘I spent a half hour alone with her.’

“ ‘And was it she who told you all this?’

“ ‘No Lionel, we conversed about nothing like it.’

“ ‘You see then, mother, you were wrong to be uneasy. Rose was no doubt very kind to you, and to give you pleasure, also spoke of me with interest. I draw the conclusion from your words that she is not yet altogether hostile to me. This hope is a sweet consolation in my sorrow.’

“ A sad smile played around my mother’s lips; she seemed unwilling to believe in my doubts, but after many efforts on my part to undermine her conviction, she admitted the possibility of being mistaken as to the meaning of Mademoiselle Pavelyn’s words, who indeed had told her nothing of a positive nature. Then my mother attempted to prove to me what a source of sorrow and humiliation it would prove to M. and Madame Pavelyn if her

suspensions were correct. She recalled one by one every benefit they had heaped upon me since my childhood, and endeavored to make me understand my duty before God and my generous benefactors, to dispel all error from Rose's mind, and to take every opportunity to crush it, if it were true her friendship had changed into a warmer sentiment. According to her ideas I should make my visits to M. Pavelyn's as few as the strict law of politeness dictated, and even at the risk of angering Rose, I should still appear cold and reserved in her society.

“While my mother with touching tenderness thus endeavored to arm me against the danger that threatened me, I several times felt a desire to let her look into my heart, to ask her for strength against my own weakness; but as I thought of it I shrunk with terror at making the confession which would have overwhelmed her still more with uneasiness and pain. My father, too, would have had to learn from her that I had permitted myself to be carried away by a sentiment which in his eyes could have no other source than foolish pride and cowardly ingratitude. With the severity and loyalty of an honest heart, he would have felt obliged immediately to lay the matter before M. Pavelyn, and to tell him I had become unworthy his esteem and protection. This would have been the height of misfortune as well for my patrons as myself. My secret must remain buried within my heart, and could I keep it until death no one but myself would suffer.

“I therefore said nothing to my mother that in the least would make her suspect my love for Rose, and promised to follow her advice in every particular as I had followed it already since the fatal evening party.

“My mother exacted of me that I should write her towards the end of the week ; she told me that if the fever did not leave me now that the examinations were at an end, she would send my father to me to talk the matter over, and see if it would not be better to go to Bordeghem until I was entirely restored.

“She embraced me once more ; spoke to me with a confidence she did not herself share, and finally left me, turning back twenty times to repeat her adieu.

“After she was gone, I forgot the entire world to dwell upon my happiness. I had been mistaken : it was not the son of the rich banker, it was not M. Conrad de Somerghen, who possessed the love of Rose : no, no ! I, I alone was beloved.

“Perhaps the joy, which almost amounted to delirium, which carried me away, which made my heart beat as if Heaven had opened to receive me, was wrong ; but I had become utterly blinded.

“I only thought of her love, I only heard my mother’s voice repeating to me :

“‘If there be on earth a man loved by Rose, he is no other than yourself, my son, Lionel Wolvenaer.’

“My breast swelled with pride, my heart leaped

with joy; something within told me my malady was entirely cured. Now my blood circulated with an unknown energy through my veins. I left my bed, for I needed motion and space.

“For one moment the thought passed through my mind that I was preparing for myself the bitterest disenchantment—that my mother was mistaken, and with my first visit to M. Pavelyn’s my illusions would vanish like a vain dream; but this did not diminish my joy, for even the very doubt caused me inexpressible happiness.

CHAPTER XXI.

“By the next morning my excitement had somewhat subsided. I was at first carried away with wonder that Rose could ever have loved me, but by degrees a violent reaction took place with regard to my own feelings. However ardently I had hoped and looked forward to Rose’s returning my affection, I began turning over all the reasons which should prove to me that my mother might be mistaken, and finally relapsed into frightful doubt which was more painful than the certainty even of Rose’s dislike.

“Assailed and harassed by my uneasy thoughts, I left my lodging as soon as the sun appeared above the horizon, and wandered around the town in the solitary country lanes, dreaming, talking, gesticulating, as if I had wished to prove a painful fact to some invisible companion.

“I thus wandered about for two or three days, thinking of nothing but the resolve I was obliged to take, the painful deliberation about which absorbed all my mind’s strength. The fever had left me.

“Following my mother’s advice even at the risk of incurring M. Pavelyn’s displeasure, I avoided every opportunity which would bring me into Rose’s presence. Yet I was irresistibly drawn to

break this promise. What could throw some little light on this frightful uncertainty? How should I know my duty if I did not ascertain, by a visit to my benefactor's house, that there was really a change in Rose's sentiments towards me?

"I resolved once more to gratify my heart's desire, after which I would never again approach Rose without being absolutely obliged to do so.

"I further resisted for two more days a wish that I could not entirely justify to myself, and then went to M. Pavelyn's house, trembling with fear and agitation.

"Rose received me with greater coldness than usual, she scarcely vouchsafed me a salute, and I had been but a few moments in her presence when she discovered some pretext for leaving the apartment. I need not add that she took no part in my conversation with her parents. She continually turned away from me, and behaved altogether as though I were not there.

"I felt deeply wounded, for I could not misunderstand it. Her dislike to me had become much more evident than before; bitterness and bad humor might be the temporary indications of nervous indisposition, but the complete indifference which she maintained towards me, was it not most certainly a sign of contempt and aversion?

"When my visit was over, and I left M. Pavelyn's, I was extremely sad, yet my heart did not seem to be agitated; on the contrary, I bowed my head in resignation under the weight of disenchantment, and accepted uncomplainingly my unhappy fate.

“Often when alone in my room, tears escaped me, but I at once mastered this welling up of my pain as a sign of sorrow without hope and without an end.

“I gathered up courage enough to follow faithfully my mother’s advice. Not only did I keep away from M. Pavelyn’s house during two weeks, but I even avoided the streets where I ran the risk of meeting any of the family, and I found some excuse for not dining with him the following Sunday.

“Happily my mind was somewhat distracted from these unfortunate reveries by a matter very near my heart; though for some days past I had almost entirely forgotten it.

“One of my comrades from the academy had come to see and spend part of the afternoon with me. The board of examiners, he said, had met for the past week every morning, and had already expressed their opinions about some of the inferior competitors. They might any day bring in their verdict as to the competitors who modelled after nature. This only depended upon the rapidity with which they worked. At all events, by the end of the week I would hear of my success, if I could believe my comrade, for he had no doubt I should be proclaimed victor.

“This student, like myself, belonged to the class who modelled from nature, and studied drawing to qualify himself for historical painting. He was a jovial fellow, filled with a love for his art and faith in life. He described gaily the great honor about to

be bestowed upon me: I would be crowned with laurel amid the plaudits of thousands of spectators. The chief officer in command of the garrison would himself hang around my neck the gold medal. The prefect—at that time the governor was so called—would then conduct the laureates of the higher classes in his carriage to his hotel, and invite them to dine together with the principal notabilities of the town.

“ My comrade, carried away by his ardent and enthusiastic imagination, predicted for me a brilliant future, and placed before my mind’s eye not only the possibility of reaching fame, but also fortune, which would necessarily be the fruit of my high attainments. He called to view crowned heads loading me with honor, and my even being called to dwell in a palace, loved and respected by all the nation as one of the glories of my country.

“ I allowed myself to be carried away by these predictions—not so far as to believe such a brilliant fate might overtake me, but his highly colored language and noble enthusiasm raised my courage, and made me face the future with confidence and even with pride.

“ “ When he left me, reflection only increased the good dispositions which these new ideas had developed, and I cried out with an energetic gesture,

“ “ Well, since she for whom my heart has throbbed from my childhood only feels dislike for me, let me concentrate all the powers of my mind on that other love—my art.’

“ From this time I felt strengthened and comforted, and though now and then Rose’s cold face appeared to me and made my brow bend beneath a weight of sadness, I flattered myself with having found in the love of art the means to stifle by degrees another sentiment which was gnawing at my heart like a cruel worm.

“ These new dispositions so soothed me, that the next morning, for the first time since the beginning of the competitions, I took a piece of clay, which I fashioned into various forms according to the inspiration of my fancy.

“ Finally my mind dwelt more particularly on the execution of a little group, the composition of which pleased me, for it was the expression of my present position. It was that of a young man placed between Love and Art, who, attracted and seduced by both, concluded by rejecting Love’s crown of roses to take up that of laurel offered him by Art.

“ While I silently worked, that I might give to the group the proper form towards the final expression of my thought, my door was suddenly opened; and before I could take a step forward to see who had come to disturb me so inopportunistically and with so little ceremony, M. Pavelyn folded me in his arms, while congratulating me joyfully upon my victory. Only a half hour before, the judges of those competitors modelling after nature had made known their decision. My generous patron, who had long before promised the janitor of the academy a gener-

ous reward, that he might be the first to hear the good news, had at once received notice of the important decision, and breathlessly hastened to salute me as the happy victor, the artist who owed to him his talent and its accomplishment.

Tears streamed down my cheeks, not only for joy because of my triumph, but of emotion for M. Pavelyn's tender friendship; he was happier than I, a beaming pride glistened in his eyes, and he rejoiced with a sincerity as great as if he himself had obtained the crown of laurel. After the first burst of joy, he said he had long before determined to make me a present if I obtained the great prize at the academy, and this present he begged my acceptance of at once. It was a gold watch and chain, and a key inlaid with a precious stone.

"Trembling with emotion at the sight of this valuable gift, deeply touched by the generous delicacy with which it was offered me, carried away by a transport of gratitude, I threw myself into my benefactor's arms and embraced him, weeping with the same tenderness as though he had been my father.

"It was the first time in my life I had been carried away by such great emotion. I had scarcely clasped M. Pavelyn to my breast than I drew back, in the fear that my temerity had annoyed my benefactor; but he looked at me with tearful eyes, and appeared so overcome as not to be able to speak.

"After a moment's silence he took my hand and said:

"Lionel, you have a noble heart. I would give

half my fortune if God had vouchsafed to give me a son with a heart like yours, but He has at least permitted me to protect you like a father, and to ensure your happiness in this world. I hold myself sufficiently recompensed by your gratitude, and the hope of having given to my country a distinguished artist. I shall now go, my son; so much agitation is not good for me, and moreover you should write at once to your parents, to announce this good fortune. Come this afternoon at three o'clock, after the exchange is closed; we will then have grown calmer. I have ordered the table to be prepared as for a feast. Rose now appears brighter and gayer; the news of your success has given her great joy. Good bye until this afternoon—we will drink a bumper to your first prize, and spend some hours happily together.'

"He shook my hand once more and went down stairs.

"I remained a moment standing near my room door, my hands carried to my head, asking myself if I were not the toy of some strange dream; but the doubt was but a flash, a smile of happiness irradiated my face, and lifting my hands to heaven, while praising God I ran around my room like one possessed, who knows not what he is doing. That which turned my head with joy was not the triumph: no doubt this news would have sufficed to give me deep satisfaction, but spite of my reason and spite of my will, my poor heart was so hungry for all that would bring it near Rose, that amid the many

reasons I had for being happy, it only appreciated what could throw a ray of light into its wretched despair.

“Did not M. Pavelyn say that he would have given the half of his fortune if God had vouchsafed him a son like me? Strange and mysterious words! Rose had rejoiced in my triumph. Had God in His infinite goodness resolved to overwhelm me in a single day with more happiness than a feeble mortal could bear!

“These confused ideas were put an end to by the arrival of Master John and Dame Petronilla, who had learned from M. Pavelyn that I had just taken the grand prize at the academy, and who appeared in my chamber with a bottle of white wine and three wine glasses to drink to the health of the *primus*.

“Before the bottle was empty the janitor of the academy came to bring me the official notice of the judges’ decision; immediately after, three or four of my comrades rushed into my room; and, as the news of my success had spread rapidly through the town, all my friends and acquaintances successively came to congratulate me. I could scarcely, between all this coming and going, find time to write to my parents; and when the hour approached for me to go to M. Pavelyn’s, I was obliged to deny myself to visitors that I might be able to devote some little time to my toilet.

“I went from my room with a light and happy heart. All these congratulations, all these compliments, had raised me in my own esteem; and it

seemed to me that though equality could never exist between the son of an humble peasant and the daughter of his benefactor, the distance between herself and him was considerably lessened by the triumph of the artist. But how all my castles in Spain fell into ruins as I took my first step into the house of my patron! Rose had become suddenly ill, and was in bed. On this occasion the illness was neither imaginary nor caused by petulance of temper. The physician had been sent for, and he had pronounced Rose's attack to be a slight fever.

“ Madame Pavelyn, after congratulating me, left us to tend her daughter's bedside ; she did not come to dinner, and only appeared once to tell us Rose did not seem worse and was now sleeping quietly.

“ M. Pavelyn was very uneasy about his daughter's condition : what he said was not of a nature to dispel the gloom that saddened my mind. The feast therefore that was given in my honor was not very gay ; he did not talk much, so absorbed was he in anxious thought. Was Rose then really ill ? Alas ! the fear made me tremble and pale ! Had she feigned this indisposition to avoid my presence, and not be obliged to congratulate me ? However this might be, and whatever the direction I gave to my thoughts, on all sides I saw only sorrow and anguish, so that when I left my patron my heart was sadder and my mind more cast down than if the prize at the academy had never been mine.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Two days after I learned from Master John, my landlord, that Rose’s indisposition could have had no consequences, as he had seen her return from church with her maid.

“I therefore had reason to think she had feigned this illness, that she might not be present at the feast given in my honor.

“This thought wounded me deeply, and I resolved for a long time not to take one step towards seeing Rose; but after struggling with myself for two weeks, my will gave way, and I called at her father’s. Rose had gone with her mother to Bordeghem. M. Pavelyn was to join them there the next day, and they would probably remain together at the chateau to enjoy the spring weather, until the time fixed upon by the academy for formally distributing the prizes.

“My patron invited me to accompany him to Bordeghem.

“I was dying with desire, and the very thought made my heart beat, but I reflected that Rose would wish to return to town as soon as she saw me arrive there.

“I therefore should compel her to leave the chateau, and besides, deprive my mother of the pleasure she took in Rose’s society.

"I therefore declined, giving various pretexts, and allowed M. Pavelyn to go alone to Bordeghem.

"The family of my benefactor remained a long while at the chateau without showing any sign of returning.

"I feared at times that Rose would find some reason for not being present at the distribution of prizes. But then I reflected that for nothing in the world would M. Pavelyn give up the pleasure of seeing his protégé crowned before thousands of spectators, and I still hoped he would not allow of Rose's missing the ceremony.

"At last came the day for the distribution of prizes. A spacious hall, which was called the *Sodality*, was prepared and decorated with great elegance for the occasion. All along the walls floated hangings of red velvet, caught up at equal distances by the imperial eagle, whose extended claws held branches of laurel, as if wishing to crown the victors in the name of their august sovereign. At each corner loomed up a gigantic statue of *Renown*, with trumpet in mouth, proclaiming the names of those for whom the career of art was about to open under favorable auspices. At the bottom of the hall, seated upon a platform, were the authorities of the city department, the prefect, the sub-prefect, the mayor, the president of the imperial court, a number of generals and civic functionaries so covered with gold trimmings and decorations, that the sight of such splendor dazzled the eyes,

and made the heart beat with admiration and respect. At the lower end of the platform was placed a large military band, which already before the ceremonies commenced made the hall echo with the warlike sound of the beating of drums. The hall itself was filled with spectators of every condition. In the front rank, occupying seats covered with velvet, were members of the principal families of Antwerp, the nobility, rich landowners and distinguished merchants with their wives and daughters; a little further down good citizens, and still further again the working classes, who were easily recognized by the blue smock-frocks of the men, and the caps of the women.

“Upon these thousands of faces of rich and poor beamed joyful expectation and bright animation; it almost seemed as if each one of the spectators had come to witness the triumph of some beloved son—for such are the people of Antwerp, the lowest artisan loves and appreciates art, and is interested in the renown of the Antwerp school.

“The students who had gained the prizes, and who were to be called by turns to receive their medals from the prefect's hands, were seated apart on benches to the left of the hall.

“From the position I occupied, I could not see distinctly what was taking place at the entrance of the hall; every ten minutes I rose from my seat to cast an anxious glance upon the audience. As long as the entrance of the people had continued without interruption, I cherished the hope of seeing my

benefactors; but now that the music had begun, the overture which was to precede the distribution of prizes, my heart fell, and I grew pale; they had not yet arrived. On rising, I saw that the seats which had been reserved for them on the first row remained empty.

“Thus neither M. Pavelyn, his wife, or daughter, would witness my triumph! Of what value to me would be the applause of the entire world, if he, my benefactor, if she, who had made me an artist, were not present? Alas! Rose had refused to attend the distribution of prizes—my fears were realized.

“The last chords of the music died away—a deep-drawn sigh escaped from my bosom, as if my heart were lightened of a heavy load.

“I saw M. and Madame Pavelyn—and Rose! Thanks be to God, my presentiment had deceived me.

“A soft smile irradiated my face; I trembled with joy. The festive hall was filled for me with all the brightness that my entranced soul could desire, with what my eyes beheld.

“As Rose was seated between her parents on the first row, I could not see her face; but I could, while looking down the rows of spectators, keep my eyes fastened on her. It soon appeared to me as if an invisible current was established between herself and me, to put us into secret communication. I seemed to feel her heart beat in unison with mine.

“I was awakened from this strange dream by the

voice of his excellency the prefect, who pronounced an eloquent discourse on the noble and useful mission of the arts upon society; he extolled those who consecrated their lives with devotion in illustrating their country and humanity; after which the sounds of music were mingled with the applause of his hearers, and the distribution of prizes began. At least twenty of the students were called in turn to the platform; for all the classes at the academy, even to the very lowest, had taken part in the contest. A great number of these victors were children whom they wished to encourage by giving them a branch of laurel, or a handsome book. It was only for the upper classes of the three principal branches that the prizes were of real value, for it was a sign that those entering the lists in art were armed with all the strength and all the chances for success that the academic teaching can give to its intelligent and industrious pupils. They were to begin with the distribution of the prizes in architecture, then those of drawing and painting, and finally, in conclusion, the class of sculpture; therefore, as they always began with the lower classes, the gold medal I had won would be given me at the end, when my crowning was to bring the ceremonies to a close.

“While the students whose names were called walked up in turn to the platform, and received their prizes amidst general acclamation and the playing of the band, I never took my eyes off Rose. She applauded each laureate; I saw her clapping her

hands with all her might, and when the first prize in architecture was given, I fancied I distinguished amid the acclamations her sweet voice crying out:

“Bravo! bravo! bravo!”

“I was at first pleased that Rose should so openly take part in the general excitement. I might therefore hope she would not refuse me her applause. To be applauded by Rose, hear her cry of joy resound in my ears—what happiness, what praise could be compared to that commendation?”

“By degrees, however, a feeling of uneasiness crept into my heart. If Rose thus continued to encourage and applaud each pupil who was crowned, would not her hands become tired, and her enthusiasm grow cool by the time my turn came to be congratulated by her? The ceremonies lasted so long, and so many laureates were crowned, that I began to count with jealous anxiety each time Rose clapped her hands, as if I supposed the slightest mark of her approbation was something taken from me. Finally my name resounded, and I mounted the steps, my heart palpitating, until I stood before his honor the prefect, who received me standing, and made me a short address.

“I heard not a word of what he was saying. My fixed gaze was fastened on the spot occupied by Rose—I wished to note the effect of my triumph upon her; but while M. and Madame Pavelyn regarded me with a joyous smile and a look of pride in their eyes, Rose held down her head; she had al-

lowed her lace veil to fall over and conceal her face. Even at such a moment as this she refused me the applause she had been so prodigal of to others.

“ I was so cruelly affected by this bitter disillusion that I became almost insensible as to what was passing around me. The mayor of the city placed the gold medal around my neck and embraced me, the prefect crowned me with the laurel wreath, which was the signal for applause. The music resounded, joyous acclamations repeated again and again filled the hall. But Rose never moved !

“ With heart oppressed and eyes dimmed, weeping interiorly, my limbs giving way under me, I descended from the platform and was on my way to take my place, when M. Pavelyn came forward to meet me, took my hand, and with a joyous movement drew me towards his wife. Then he embraced me with pride, in the very eyes of the public.

“ Madame Pavelyn pressed my hands, and they both overwhelmed me with the liveliest marks of their interest and affection.

“ ‘ Come Rose,’ said the father to his daughter, who never yet had raised her eyes to me, ‘ command your feelings, my child ; Lionel may well think you alone are indifferent to his splendid success ; at least give him your hand, to prove to him that at the bottom of your heart you take part in his triumph.’

“ As he said this he lifted the lace veil that hid Rose’s face ! Great heavens ! she was weeping !

“ I could scarcely believe my eyes—she had joyfully applauded the other victors; my triumph caused tears of tenderness to bedew her cheek!

“ She rose slowly and cast one single look into my eyes—a long look into which her very soul seemed to melt; it was the concentration of a plaint, a prayer, a ray of affection without limit, a revelation which caused the blood to stop coursing in my veins, and made me become as pale as a corpse.

“ Obeying her father’s mandate, she placed her hand in mine without a word; it trembled as if her nerves were disturbed with fever, and this hand, though as cold as ice, burnt mine and made me shudder at her touch, which seemed to establish a magnetic current between us.

“ Oh God! I had read her heart as if it were an open book! There was no more room to doubt; her eyes had told me all. My mother was then not mistaken; I was loved by her who was the source of my faith and the end of my life!

“ Until now, M. and Madame Pavelyn had regarded my stupor and Rose’s tears as a natural outcome of the emotion which the solemn crowning had produced; but who knows whether we would not have betrayed to every one what our eyes had revealed in that look which I shall never forget, if Divine Providence had not protected us from such a disgrace?

“ The authorities and notabilities had left their places, the band had ceased playing, and the hall was nearly empty. Two or three of the professors

came forward to tell me the prefect had entered his carriage, and it was wanting in politeness that I should make the chief of the department wait for me. Saying this they took me by the arm, and scarcely giving me time to apologize to my benefactors, they drew me toward the hall door. While walking along I once more turned my head around; my eyes met Rose's. I was not mistaken, I was certainly the happiest man on earth!

"I lightly mounted the carriage, the prefect reproached me laughingly, told me to sit beside him, and gave the signal for departure. The carriage was one for festive occasions, drawn by four beautiful horses; on the seat were two lacqueys in livery, and behind the carriage two chasseurs with green plumes in their hats. Within it were the prefect, the three laureates of the higher classes of architecture, of drawing and painting, but as it had pleased the prefect to place me by his side, it seemed to give me greater dignity than my comrades. We had kept our laurel wreaths upon our heads, as was the custom, and our medals glistened upon our breasts.

"We were cheered by the crowd on our route; acclamations and vivas resounded far and near as we approached. I held my head high, and my eyes wandered over the people with great pride. I felt so aggrandized, that a king traversing in the midst of his people could not have been more entirely impressed with a sense of his superiority than I at that moment. Those who saw me must have sup-

posed that my success had blinded and rendered me proud. But how mistaken were they ! It was not the laureate of sculpture who, with swelling breast and eyes sparkling with haughtiness, seemed to wish to dominate the crowd by his pride. No, no—this triumphant man was he who knew himself beloved by Rose. These honors, these crowns, these acclamations from an enthusiastic crowd, were sufficient to turn a young man's head, but my head was encircled by the rose-crown of Love.

“ The applause of the entire universe was as nothing compared to a single look which from Rose's eyes had beamed upon me !

“ As soon as we alighted at the prefecture, we took our places at the banquet with the most noteworthy personages of the department. One of my comrades was seated beside the mayor of the city, another by the general-in-chief ; I was to the right of the prefect, who seemed to take particular interest in me, and loudly declared that he liked me greatly because my disposition was merry.

“ And indeed, while seated beside him in the carriage, he had spoken to me several times and advised me to have confidence in the future.

“ I replied with such animation, such hope and merriment, that the good man, who did not know the motive for this excitement, had admired me as being a young artist of the most fortunate nature.

“ I do not understand wherein lay the strength of Rose's look, and how the certainty of being beloved by her had suddenly awakened all the re-

sources of my mind and imagination ; but the first course was scarcely over when every eye was turned towards me, and I held so to speak the thread of the conversation in my own hands. All that fell from my lips was so sensible, so original and full of wit, and yet so good-natured withal, that the guests retorted for the mere pleasure of hearing my replies. And thanks to me, the banquet, which otherwise doubtless would have been dull and tedious, became a joyous feast, where each one laughed and enjoyed himself with good will.

“ I should certainly never have allowed myself to be so carried away in the presence of persons of such exalted station, had not all the guests, and more especially his honor the prefect, encouraged and seemed to be grateful to me for the gayety I spread around, as if with open hands, over the feast.

“ At dessert I rose and in the name of my victorious companions drank a toast to his honor the prefect, the protector of the arts in the department of the Schelde.

“ I had probably in part lost my senses, but this folly, instead of dulling my mind, on the contrary made it sparkling and bright. While giving my toast, I became so eloquent and was so happy in the choice of words, so carried away by the sentiment I was uttering, that I drew tears from the eyes of my hearers, and each one came up to clasp my hand with tenderness.

“ When the general and the mayor had been toasted, one of the invited guests suggested that I

no doubt knew how to sing. I did not have to be begged, and selected a song whose title was 'The Happiness of Being Loved.' It is needless to say all were transported, for my very soul vibrated in the song, and moreover my voice had never before been so pure and sonorous.

"I sung several romances; and when the prefect finally rose to give the signal for retiring, the most noteworthy of the guests gathered around me to testify their satisfaction and good will.

"Whether this wholesome praise had somewhat confused my brain, or that I was the worse for some glasses of champagne I had taken, when I entered the carriage which was to convey me back home the city appeared to be filled with sparkling lights, with all the colors of the rainbow, and the world was changed into a glowing paradise.

"Poor soul, thou wert drinking long draughts in thy cup of happiness, without dreaming that much bitterness would be found at the bottom. And yet, oh, my God! however sad was the fate reserved for me, be Thou blessed for that one half day of joy!

CHAPTER XXIII.

“How limited is man’s capacity for happiness, and how great his power for suffering! When there is aught to trouble him, he makes a vain appeal to his good sense and strong will, grief gains the mastery—pursuing him for weeks and months together—while the wound still bleeds; but let him see his dearest hopes fulfilled, let him reach the summit of human happiness, at once his forces diminish, and his soul returns through various fluctuations to the sense of sorrow, which would seem to be its natural condition.

“I had been the day before steeped in happiness, having achieved a great triumph, and received the applause and praise of a thousand admirers, feeling myself the envy of all; to this was added the revelation of Rose’s love. Should not all this suffice for the happiness of my whole life? And yet I had permitted several hours to slip by while walking my room with arms crossed over my breast, and head bent down, engrossed with disquieting thoughts.

“But I struggled manfully against the discouragement which had taken possession of me.

“I endeavored to recall the delightful scenes of the day before; I sought to conjure up in imagination the thunder of applause given me by the people, and to behold again the tears glistening in

Rose's loving eyes. In a word, I became alarmed at the sadness which oppressed me, and endeavored to raise between it and me, as an armor, the remembrance of my happiness; but spite of these efforts to recall my failing courage, my enthusiasm and my transports, I could not evoke the experiences of the day before. Wearied with this ineffectual struggle I dropped into a chair, and in terror looked within myself for the cause of this impotence. The cause was the voice of conscience, which in my intense desire for happiness I had stifled; but I finally bowed my head utterly vanquished, and, in spite of inward warring, listened to its implacable utterances.

“Alas! my joy was utter ingratitude, my happiness a crime. Frightful truth! All that I was I owed to M. Pavelyn—education, knowledge, hope, renown, the very clothes I wore, had been received from his bounty. And not content with these generous gifts with which he had strewn my path, I dared, to the detriment of his happiness, to nourish an affection the very knowledge of which would fill him with horror and shame—not only he, but all his family. The shoemaker's son was happy because he was beloved by Rose. What then was the wish of his foolish, blind heart? Terrible thought! to desire to draw the daughter of his benefactor into an unequal match, and forever create for herself and parents a poisoned life, with the consequent disgrace there would be upon such an alliance. These reproaches of conscience, in spite of my efforts to stifle them, finally weighed so heavily on my mind

that I was crushed beneath this painful but evident truth.

“ I rose to my feet and stood motionless, with an oppressed heart, and pallid face.

“ It was impossible for me to commit a base act, and I shuddered at the thought even of becoming ungrateful, but it cost my unhappy mind many efforts to stifle the hope that would revive.

“ When I had finally heard all my conscience reproached me with, and realized my folly, duty's stern image rose up before me, to exact more from me than a passive renunciation. It whispered that not only should I tear from my heart every atom of this fatal love, but also I must kill every vestige of it in the breast of Rose. It became necessary for me to overthrow every hope, all faith, my very being, and extinguish the only light of my life—to face a frightful future as sombre and mournful as an abyss. There was no possible escape from this sacrifice ; my duty was before me, imperious, inexorable, pointing on the one hand to gratitude and respect, on the other to cowardice and shame.

“ Finally my resolution was taken. It became imperative that I should tear myself away from my benefactors. In no wise should I fan Rose's fancy, by a prolonged absence, but must allow her to think I was insensible to her love, and that her presence even had become disagreeable to me, that therefore I left with design. Cruel resolve ! If Rose loved as I did, what a bitter cup was I reaching out to her, making her to drink it, even to the very dregs !

But though my pity for what she was about to suffer brought tears to my eyes, there was nothing to be done—I had to bow my head beneath the decree of fate.

“To leave town and country suddenly I was unable to do, but I resolved to go at once to Bordeghem, there to remain a long while—a very long while—with my parents, that I might accustom my benefactors to my absence; where, in solitude, I would weigh carefully what remained for me to do, and if I concluded it were best, I would leave Bordeghem for Brussels, and see whether I was not able to find work there at one or another sculptor’s, that my wants might be supplied.

“What I feared was that my courage would fail me in carrying out this painful duty.

“I filled my trunks hastily with linen, clothes, and all that belonged to me, like one making preparations for a long voyage.

“I should have the trunks brought to me in a few days by the village messenger, and would write an apology to M. Pavelyn for leaving suddenly, telling him I felt tired and weary, and had gone to Bordeghem to obtain the necessary rest.

“To reach the city gates I was obliged to cross the ‘Place de Meir,’ and pass before M. Pavelyn’s house; but I did not wish to run the risk of being recognized by Rose or himself, for I was afraid of my own weakness, and did not doubt that the smallest circumstance would make me waver in my resolution. I therefore determined to go by Rennes

street and traverse the Green Cemetery, and go out of town by the short new street, without approaching the 'Place de Meir.' Just as I placed my hand upon the lock I cast once more a look around my little room, which had seen me grow up to manhood, which had been the recipient of my joyous confidences, of my hopes, of my sorrows; a tear moistened my lashes, and I tore myself away with difficulty from this loved spot, as one who is banished tears himself away from the arms of a friend he never more may see.

"When I found myself out of doors, entering Rennes street, it must have been about ten o'clock in the morning. This sad farewell weighed heavily on my heart; a black veil seemed suspended before my eyes; I did not observe the passers by, and I walked along buried in painful thought.

"Suddenly I halted, my feet refused to go forward; I raised my head, and drew back with a plaintive cry. I found myself before M. Pavelyn's door. How did I get there? Ah! while I was making myself wretched, while I was giving myself up to my reflections, the soul of Rose, through some mysterious power, had drawn mine towards her as the magnet attracts the steel.

"I wished to retire, but then I saw the servant at the window, who made me a sign she would open the door for me.

"I did not dare fly: what would they think of such strange conduct? Possibly it would be better to notify M. Pavelyn myself of my intended de-

parture—for this I need only enter and leave at once. The door was opened, and I went in with the intention of abridging my farewells. The servant conducted me to the apartment where sat M. Pavelyn.

“How it was I did not then betray my secret is what I do not yet understand. Perhaps entire discouragement kept my heart in check, and rendered its workings less visible. I saw before me a small table on which a sumptuous breakfast was served; at this table Rose was seated, and by her side was Conrad de Somerghem!

“Between M. and Madame Pavelyn was a stout gentleman who must have been Conrad’s father, for the principal features of their faces resembled each other.

“M. Pavelyn scarcely allowed me time to take in with a quick but furtive glance the scene before me. When I appeared he rose joyfully, grasped my hand and made me sit beside him, then began to speak of my triumph with great praise, and of my future as an artist, presenting me to his guests as a young man full of zeal and gratitude.

“M. Pavelyn and the elder M. Somerghem appeared very animated, and I supposed the Spanish wine that I saw upon the table had put them in a good humor. They talked without ceasing in a loud tone, and overwhelmed me with kindly questions which they most frequently replied to themselves, without giving me time to put in a word—most happily, for my attention and my thoughts were elsewhere.

“On the other side of the table was Conrad de Somerghem, his face radiant with happiness; he bent his head towards Rose, and while smiling whispered words to her I could not understand, but which found a sad echo in my heart. There was something audacious in his joy and gestures, something familiar that made me shudder with indignation, and wounded me as though he were insulting her whom I loved as the light of my eyes.

“Rose listened to him with quiet politeness, and even endeavored to smile.

“She had only given me one look; I seemed to understand she was complaining of her hard fate and imploring my pity for her sufferings.

“What was happening here? My God! could this be? Why are the two fathers exchanging looks of intelligence and satisfaction? Why does Madame Pavelyn keep her eyes, running over with tears of tenderness, intently fixed on Conrad de Somerghem?

“A horrible fear agitated me; my heart beat to breaking. I saw the moment coming when I should no longer be able to master myself, and my terrible secret would escape me. I rose and said stammering to M. Pavelyn that I had made up my mind to go to Bordeghem and spend some time with my parents, to recover from the effects of the fever and the fatigue of the competition.

“I had not wished to leave without letting my benefactor know my intention, and had only come to bid him farewell, and present my respects to his family.

“I therefore begged he would allow me to take my leave.

M. Pavelyn endeavored to make me remain, but as I insisted he said I was right to go and seek some rest after so much effort and excitement, and he even besought me to lengthen my stay at Bordeghem until such time as I felt myself entirely recovered from my fatigue. I gave Rose a long last look, then saluted every one and left the room.

“In the ante-chamber where I bent down to pick up my hat and cane which I had left there, I was taken aback by the voice of a woman whispering in my ear.

“I drew up with a start, and no doubt paled; for the woman, who had whispered some words which I did not understand, exclaimed laughing—

“‘My goodness, M. Lionel, how easily you are alarmed! Now you are as white with fear as if you had seen some apparition rise up behind you!’

“It was Madame Pavelyn’s maid, a girl who was very fond of me; yet her unexpected appearance just now annoyed me, and I looked at her with bitterness.

“‘Come, come’ she said in a light tone, ‘do not be so angry with me for making you start, I wanted to tell you something; but you already know it, don’t you?—the great news! No? why, don’t you see the handsome young man in there? He is worth millions, and is of noble birth.’

“‘Well? well?’ I cried, shuddering with fear and impatience.

“ ‘Then you don't yet know?’ she said, lowering her voice—‘Rose is going to be married: that young man is her betrothed.’

“This news wounded my heart so deeply, and I was obliged to make such desperate efforts to conceal my despair, that I precipitated myself out of the door, laughing wildly and scarcely knowing where I was going.

“Some moments after, I found myself again in my room. Did I ask myself with astonishment what I came there for?—why I must go?—why leave the city, and perhaps the country, now that Rose was about to be married, and that there existed an impassable barrier between us? No, this was not the thought that brought me to my room; it was habit alone.

“To those walls I had confided all my secrets, all my heart-beats; the need of giving way in solitude had brought me here, and once more the worm-eaten floor absorbed my bitter tears.

“Insensibly my blood began to boil in my veins, and soon an indescribable rage dried my eyes. I formed the project of awaiting Conrad de Somerghen in the street, in open day, of calling him a coward and spitting in his face, telling him that one of us must die, and saying to him that if he were not an ignoble poltroon he would consent that the sword or the pistol should decide between us. But then an ironical smile contracted my lips, for I recognized that I was of too humble extraction to hope that M. de Somerghem would receive

my challenge otherwise than with disdain ; perhaps I might be cast into prison as a dangerous madman ; and, moreover, would not this aggressive violence make of my secret love a public scandal ? What about my benefactors and my mother ?

“ I fell exhausted upon a chair, I hid my burning head in my hands, groaning and grinding my teeth as I felt my entire impotence ! I rose up suddenly as I heard the steps of some one rapidly ascending the staircase which led to my room. It was Dame Petronnilla, who ran towards me with open arms, crying out joyfully :

“ ‘ M. Lionel, great news, great news ! Do you know it already ? Rose is going to be married ! ’

“ I looked at her with haggard eyes.

“ ‘ Yes, yes ! this news surprises and agitates you. I understand it,’ she said. ‘ It made a great impression on me when my husband, who has just returned from his work, told it to me. Were I in your place I should fly to M. Pavelyn’s, and congratulate Rose ; it will please them, for it is a great marriage, and they are delighted.’

“ She was still speaking when I went down the steps to get rid of her.

“ Master John was smoking his pipe at the door. He turned round as he heard the noise of my footsteps, and said, laughingly, while he stood aside to let me go by :

“ ‘ You are in such haste, you must know it already ? Rose is going to be married.’

“ I did not know myself ; I felt tempted to knock

him down, and went out into the street with frightful precipitation.

“The people in the street, and the very houses, seemed to cry out to me: ‘Do you not know it? Rose is going to be married’—and when I finally reached the city gate, and saw before me the flat country, and the road that led to Bordeghem, it seemed to me all the voices of the city had united to call after me:

“‘Do you not know? Rose is going to be married.’

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I WAS at Bordeghem. My parents thought as M. Pavelyn had, that I had returned to my native village to re-establish my health after illness, and to rest after the competition at the academy. My evident weakness and worn face gave an appearance of truth to this impression. Most certainly if I had reached my father's house in the demented condition in which I had left town, they all, and especially my mother, would immediately have imagined something unusual had taken place, and a mortal wound broken my heart; but after my flight from Antwerp I had had time to become calmer by degrees. The fresh air, the peaceful fields, the fatigue of a long journey made on foot, had tamed my passions and allowed the light of reason to penetrate into my mind. Two hours before reaching my native village I had been entirely recalled to a sense of duty. I once more resolved to bury in my heart the secret of my sorrow, and to guard it unto death. Now that Rose was going to be married, the slightest confidence about my love, the smallest sign even which might betray her sentiments or mine, would have been cowardly and contrary to all that was right. I could say nothing even to my mother, for no doubt my father would come to know something about it, and in his un-

flinching uprightness would overwhelm me with reproaches which my brothers and sisters must guess the cause of.

“ I had therefore allowed no one to know the true reason for my unexpected return to my native village ; and as I was still pale and thin, I had not much trouble in making every one believe that my sadness and taciturnity were only the consequences of physical weakness.

“ My mother had indeed spoken of the danger which she had pointed out to me during her last trip to Antwerp, but I had reassured her by saying that we had both been mistaken as to the state of Rose’s sentiments, and that since that time I had found her the same as ever.

“ From that moment she inquired nothing more and left me perfectly free ; she surrounded me with the tenderest care, prepared warm drinks which she said would strengthen me, and compelled me to eat choice food ; but it did not seem to trouble her that I remained entire days away from the house, and at night retired to rest before the others, that I might be alone and not obliged to talk ; and when at times my father reproached my strange behavior, she took my part, saying that the outside air, walking and perfect rest, would alone give me the peace I had lost.

“ It would cost me some trouble to relate to you the strange life I led at Bordeghem. I forever roamed about the uninhabited chateau, in the woods and the solitary paths, my mind overcome by a

dream which like a heavy cloud kept me apart from the rest of the world. It was in vain I called to the rescue all the good sense I had; everything was useless. I but beheld Rose and her sorrowful look, I only felt the worm of grief gnawing at my heart, I only heard the frightful words 'Do you not know? Rose is going to be married,' which pursued me without a moment's rest.

"The violence of passion and bitterness of despair had entirely disappeared. I neither hated nor blamed any one in the world, not even cruel fate, not even Rose's future husband; and the image of my rival, when he appeared before me, called forth no sign of anger or hatred. A great sorrow, a dreamy resignation, a sort of sickly exaltation in my grief, had taken the place of all violent agitation in my heart. Convinced from this time I had not been born ever to find happiness in this world, I gathered together one by one every memory, and made myself an imaginary world of my own, where my mind found the only peace and consolation which it could receive.

"While walking in the garden of the chateau, I stood upon the bridge and looked at the restless water; then turning to thoughts that were less sad, I gazed for hours on the grass plot which lay beside it. I saw in imagination a little girl, as delicate and pretty as an angel, and with this charming creature a poor little boy who could not talk, but whose eyes, at the smallest word or slightest smile of the little girl, shone with admiration, with grati-

tude and pride. Walking along, I followed in imagination these happy children, and trembled with blissful emotion when I saw on the young girl's face a friendly smile for the little boy. I took part in their games, when they traced out a garden plot in the narrow path, and chased the butterflies with them. I listened to their talk, and knew their very heart-beats, and realized then with cruel satisfaction that already a fatal power governed these innocent creatures, and had planted in their hearts the germ of an infinite love. I interrogated the trees, the flowers, the birds, that the recollection of past joys might make them mine again, until the decline of day and my wearied body reminded me that it was time to return home.

“Then again, I wandered in the woods and sought the trees which once heard me recount my sorrow, or had received my confidences. I recognized every spot where I once sat, and fancied I still beheld glistening in the grass the tears wept eight years before. Then, I wept for joy; the sun of hope warmed my heart with its light. Now, there was no more hope for me; my life was closed in by the sombre wall of impossibility; it was for this I had no more tears to weep—tears are a plaint or a prayer, the asking for help or pity. Why should I complain or implore pity, I to whom no earthly power could give what his heart desired, whose sorrow from its very nature must prove eternal?

“At other times I sat at the edge of the meadow

where the dumb child had worked for weeks and months, carving figures—dear treasures, with which he wished to purchase a smile. I saw the spot where the boy rolled over in fits of impotent despair because his tongue refused to utter intelligible sounds; I saw the white poplar whose bark still bore the mysterious signs, by which he had essayed to express what he did not himself understand. The cows feeding in the meadow, the shepherds cracking their whips, the silvery vapors hanging over the streams, the splendor of the setting sun, all recalled to me the past and my beautiful youth, and made me forget, my wretched pain by showing me in imagination the image of a happiness which had been, but would never be again for me.

“I had already been a long while at Bordeghem. This uninterrupted reverie which nothing disturbed, this complete solitude in the midst of memories that soothed my mind, was so sweet to me that I had not once dreamed of making for myself an independent position through my art. A few decided but severe remarks from my father, recalled me at last to the consciousness of things.

One morning as I was about leaving home to commence my solitary rambles, my father called me to his workshop; he said he considered my conduct highly blameworthy, and the less comprehensible in that I never spoke of my future intentions. He added that I was now grown to manhood, and should have sufficient pride not to be

willing to live forever at the expense of M. Pavelyn. I was not altogether recovered from my indisposition, and my father said he perfectly understood I needed rest; but this he thought did not prevent my considering my future.

“I recognized the wisdom of his warning, and promised to follow his advice. In fact, as soon as I left the village for the fields, I began to reflect about what there was for me to do. I did not wish to return to Antwerp. I no longer felt any desire to be near Rose. She would marry, and forget me. I sincerely hoped her lot would be a happy one, but I should never see her again. I was perfectly convinced my love for her would end my life, but if I could not live in her society, I should carry her memory and her image in my heart until the tomb closed upon my secret and my sorrow. I should never more enter the walls of Antwerp. I could only go to Brussels and seek at one or another sculptor's for work; but what would M. Pavelyn think of this resolution? To mention it to him would be imprudent and ridiculous, for he would never permit me to work by the day at another artist's, nor even to seek fame or fortune in any town far away, where he could not take part in my success and give me every encouragement.

“While reflecting as to how I should carry out my project without deeply wounding my benefactor, I had reached a distant point in the fields, and was leaning against the parapet of a bridge, watching the water in the rivulet slowly coursing

along, but I saw no way. Every faculty of my mind was concentrated on the question which, like an insoluble enigma, had been occupying my mind for the last hour.

“At that moment I heard my name spoken behind me: I turned, it was my younger sister who sought and was running towards me, with her shoes in her hand.

“‘Brother,’ she cried, ‘quick! You must go to the chateau—M. Pavelyn is at Bordeghem.’

“‘M. Pavelyn?’ I said, trembling with surprise. ‘And Madame—and Mademoiselle—are they with him?’

“‘He is alone, brother, all alone. I saw him alight from the carriage, and he told me he wished to speak with you. Mother sent me for you—fortunately the farrier told me the direction you had taken out of the village.’

“The certainty that Rose had not accompanied her father, dissipated all my alarm. While I returned with my sister to the village, dropping a word now and then in answer to her innocent conversation, my timid mind did its best to disquiet me by wondering what could have brought M. Pavelyn to Bordeghem, and made him wish to speak to me; but I reassured myself, thinking that as my patron was in the habit of coming every week to spend at least half a day at his chateau, I had more reason to be surprised that he had allowed three weeks to go by without appearing. Why especially to-day, when he was in the village, should he return to Antwerp without seeing me?

“At the entrance to the chateau I encountered a servant who told me M. Pavelyn was walking in the garden, and I would probably find him in the grove at the end of the row of beeches, which was the path he had taken.

“I followed the direction given me, and rapidly crossed the long avenue of old beeches. On reaching the grove, I saw my patron in the distance ; he was seated on a wooden bench at the foot of a tree, his head bowed down and arms crossed on his breast, like a man absorbed in serious thought. Fearing to surprise him disagreeably, I made a noise to announce my presence, but was already near him when he raised his head and turned his eyes upon me. A sweet benign smile appeared upon his lips ; he extended his hand without rising, and said :

“‘Here you are my dear Lionel ; I am most happy to see you. How are you getting along now ? You are still very thin ; country air has not entirely cured you, but this will come with time.’

“I knew so well my patron’s voice, I had so attentively studied its intonations during all my life, that I was sure his heart at this moment was filled with sadness ; probably my face betrayed the thought, for he did not give me time to express my anxiety.

“‘You read upon my face that I am in sorrow, is it not so ?’ he said. ‘You are not mistaken, Lionel, for I feel most unhappy. For some days past the future has appeared to me as dark as night, yet I still have one hope left. I have thought that

you, over whom I have watched like a tender father—you alone perhaps could ward off from my old age an eternal sorrow; and I knew you would not refuse me the service I have come to ask.'

"With tears in my eyes, I assured him I would bless God if he would permit me to prove my gratitude to my benefactors by any sacrifice whatever, were it at the price of my life.

"'What I am about to ask is a very strange thing,' he continued; 'but it will cause you no sacrifice. I only wish, if you accept the mission that I am about to confide to you, that you will use all your eloquence and make every effort to succeed; for if this last attempt is to be as useless as the rest, the peace and happiness of my life are gone forever. Sit there beside me, and listen to what I have to say.'

"Deeply moved by M. Pavelyn's sad and solemn tones, I seated myself, without replying, by his side, and he began as follows:

"'You know, Lionel, that Rose has never been strong. Her mother and I during her childhood were always afraid of losing her. Therefore, how we thanked God when she returned from Marseilles so rosy, strong and beautiful. But our joy was not of long duration. Hardly had she been a few months at home, when she became thin and delicate. A secret sorrow, apparently without cause, sapped her strength, and we were again seized with the fear that had poisoned a portion of our lives. I dared tell no one, but a frightful

thought pursued me. I ever saw before me, like a phantom, menacing my child, the implacable disease known as pulmonary consumption.'

"I paled, and an involuntary cry of anguish escaped me; but M. Pavelyn, regarding this as merely natural, continued without stopping:

"I went secretly to Brussels, and consulted a celebrated physician, who was once my fellow student. The better to judge of Rose's condition, he came to Antwerp; he spent a whole afternoon with us in Rose's society, as an old friend who did not wish to leave Antwerp without seeing me. Before leaving us, I took him into my private apartment to learn whether there was any foundation for my terrible fear. He told me Rose was not consumptive.'

"I lifted up my hands with a cry of joy: 'Oh, thanks, thanks!' I cried without thought, 'this would have been too cruel!'

"'Your interruption is ill timed sadly,' said M. Pavelyn. 'Would to God the physician's assertion had stopped here! But not so; he gave me to understand that though Rose had not been attacked with any lung trouble, she was yet very ill, and would probably die after lingering a long while, if I did not take measures to use the only means in my power; and, according to him, this means was marriage.'

CHAPTER XXV.

“UP to this time I had controlled my anxiety, and, so to speak, held my breath; but at last my pent-up feelings burst forth a into long sigh.

“‘I understand,’ said my patron, ‘that such things, Lionel, must affect you painfully; but allow me to proceed—you will see I have reason to think myself doubly unfortunate. The physician had said that marriage, in placing my daughter under other conditions, and in another centre, which gave her the care of a home, would furnish her with occupation, and the diversion necessary to fortify and calm her nerves. It was therefore requisite to find a husband. The task was a difficult one, since it had to be accomplished at once. From Rose’s childhood her mother’s dream and mine had been to give her the most brilliant of positions through a good marriage. Her fortune, as being our only heir, and her brilliant education, as well as the beauty of her face, gave us the right to cherish this ambition for our only child. But how find in so short a time a husband who realized our dream, at any rate in part? I had tortured my mind during several weeks, and had begun to despair; yet there was one young man whom I would willingly have accepted as a son-in-law; but his parents’ fortune was at least four times

as large as mine, and I foresaw a refusal. I was at the pinnacle of joy when the father of the young man, from some vague remarks dropped by me, declared that a marriage between his son and my daughter would be most acceptable to him, and he would give his consent in advance, if the young people were willing. The same day his son heard the proposal with great joy. As to me, it fulfilled all my wishes. What a marriage! it was a brilliant alliance, that would unite the blood of the Pavelyns with the noble blood of the Somerghems. It is of young Somerghem I speak; you saw him when you came to announce your intended departure for Bordeghem. You saw him at our evening party. He did not leave Rose's side for a moment; he is an elegant and distinguished young man—high rank, colossal fortune, brilliant education, handsome face—everything, in short all, in his favor. Well then, Lionel, we spoke to Rose of the marriage; we made her understand it was to save her from a lingering illness. We besought her to consent, telling her she would give us a great proof of love. She refused!

“ M. Pavelyn was silent, and awaited an answer. While he talked I was so deeply overcome by my painful reflections, the discovery of Rose's weak health had been so cruel a blow to me, that as an only answer, I repeated my interlocutor's last words.

“ ‘ She refuses ! ’

“ ‘ Yes Lionel,’ continued M. Pavelyn, ‘ she refuses !

Nothing can make her change her resolution. I do not know how it is, but this marriage seems to be repugnant to her. So you know what afflicts me so deeply—not alone that I cannot save my daughter but that this contemplated marriage is known to all the town. What would the Somerghems think of so unflattering a refusal? Ah! as a father I am threatened with a never-ending sorrow, and as a man with an insupportable affront! You alone, my good Lionel, may perhaps be able to avert this terrible misfortune. Rose has for you a sincere friendship; you are as young as she, you are eloquent, your feeling words will go straight to her heart. Make her understand, and point out to her, that she should accept this marriage; it is an inappreciable favor I beg you to do for me. Oh! may you succeed, and I shall esteem myself paid a thousand times over for all I have done! Will you, Lionel, gather together all your forces to obtain from Rose her consent to this marriage?’

“For some moments I had foreseen what M. Pavelyn was about to say to me. I—I myself was to implore Rose to marry Conrad de Somerghem! At first this thought made me shudder, but suddenly a reaction took place in my ideas. This marriage was perhaps in truth the only means of saving Rose from a mortal ailment. The man who had heaped benefits upon me implored from me this effort of gratitude. Oh! I could not hesitate, if in my own eyes I did not wish to appear as an ingrate, a coward, and to be despised. The sacrifice would

have to be accomplished willingly and resolutely. Therefore I replied I was willing to accompany him to Antwerp, that I might counsel Rose to marry M. de Somerghem.

“‘ You will then make an effort, a great effort—you will call upon her friendship for you and our love for her, and use every argument possible?’

“‘ Before leaving I will pray God to give power to my words,’ I replied. ‘ Trust to my gratitude and my ardent desire to do all that will be agreeable to you. You say this marriage will be the saving of Rose, sir :—can I hesitate?’

“‘ The task I impose upon you is a difficult one,’ sighed my benefactor. ‘ You do not know Rose as we do. She is a sweet, gentle girl, never selfish or wilful in ordinary matters ; but when she has once taken anything into her head, you at once see she is endowed with great force of will. I have often secretly rejoiced at it, for it gave evidence of a noble and strong character ; but now we have reason to fear that both she and ourselves will be the victims of this decision of character !’

“ M. Pavelyn had risen, and was walking slowly in the avenue of beeches. Supposing he wished me to return immediately to Antwerp, I begged him to give me a quarter of an hour to go to my father’s house and dress myself suitably ; but he told me I was to remain at Bordeghem at least until the next day ; if he took me back in his carriage, Rose would suspect that her father had imposed this mission upon me, and my counsels would lose much of

their force and weight. I was therefore to go by the stage-coach, and act as if I knew nothing; M. Pavelyn would find means to turn the conversation upon the projected marriage.

“As we walked along he took great trouble to make me understand the immense value he set on my success, and besought me to leave nothing undone to attain my end. As we approached the chateau, he called the servants and told them to harness up the horses at once.

“As this was being done, he talked cheerfully with me; his grief had been softened by the hope that I would turn away from his child and himself the threatened evil. My words inspired him with this confidence. As I supposed Rose refused to make this marriage because she loved me, I did not doubt from my advice she would yield to the recognized necessity, however great might be the sacrifice. I had several times expressed this absolute conviction, and my benefactor was sincerely grateful for it. As he stepped into his carriage, he pressed my hand warmly and said, with a look where confidence shone anew:

“‘Until to-morrow then, my good Lionel. God will give you the strength necessary to happily fulfil your noble mission.’

“I followed the carriage with my eyes, when it finally disappeared from my sight; I then left the chateau and took a secluded path. In M. Pavelyn’s presence I had not been able to reflect with entire lucidity upon the new position in which his un-

expected appeal had placed me; but when I was alone and no longer obliged to overcome my emotion, my heart commenced beating violently, I felt myself growing pale, and my knees gave way under me; my mind essayed to revolt from the sacrifice of its last hope. But this struggle against duty did not last long. I soon began to face from an entirely different point of view the task imposed upon me. I loved the daughter of my benefactors; perhaps I had not done what I should to stifle this affection, perhaps I was indeed guilty towards my patrons and towards God. I had sought within myself for every reason to excuse my weakness, but now the hour had come to prove that my love was sufficiently pure and noble to be immolated for the happiness of her I loved. Most certainly the mission I had accepted was a painful one, and I foresaw that many times yet her heart would be torn with anguish and pain before the sacrifice was consummated; but I would offer my sufferings to God in atonement for my error, and if I were guilty He would grant me perhaps with His pardon the peace of heart I had lost.

“ Thus dreaming, and firmly determined to drive away all thoughts except such as would encourage me to accomplish this terrible task, I directed my steps towards my parents’ house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“THE next day, as I alighted from the stage-coach at the city gates, and entered the street lead- to M. Pavelyn’s house, I was obliged to gather up every energy so that I might not give way at the time my task was to be accomplished. Until now I had been able to combat my hesitation and fear, but as each step brought me nearer to the fatal moment, I felt my strength giving way ; my heart beat violently, and every now and then a cold shiver ran through me. It was not that I halted in my resolve, nor that I felt any regret at having accepted this painful mission ; but there was within me a secret power struggling against my will, whose tumultuous efforts increased my alarm and suffering every moment.

“After stopping two or three times on the way to master my emotion, I felt myself growing calmer, and rung courageously at M. Pavelyn’s door.

“As I arrived at the hour agreed upon, M. Pavelyn was watching for me. He came into the vestibule to meet me, pressed my hand with joy, and at once introduced me into the room where his daughter was seated near a table, with a piece of embroidery in her hand.

“‘See, Rose,’ he gayly exclaimed, ‘here is Lionel come to see us.’

“She lifted up her head from her work; her countenance was illumined with the brightness of a joy that was indescribable, her eyes darted towards me a look full of love and gratitude. My presence alone rendered her happy. Poor victim of an unhappy love!

“The effect produced upon me by this demonstration, the sense of which I could not misunderstand, was so deep that I was compelled to make some effort to restrain the tears which filled my eyes. But Rose, who was surprised by my sudden arrival, soon obtained a mastery over herself. After stammering forth a pleasant salutation, she recovered her composure, and in the answers to what her father and I said, there was nothing further to make any one suspect the existence of any deep feeling.

“We talked for a time on quite indifferent subjects, then M. Pavelyn turned the conversation upon marriage. He spoke as if I knew nothing of Rose, briefly enumerated all the reasons which should decide his daughter in accepting this brilliant alliance, and finally asked me directly what my opinion was on the subject.

“‘There can be no doubt,’ I replied, ‘that Mademoiselle Rose should give her consent to this marriage.’

“A look from Rose caused the words to die on my lips. She gazed at me with astonishment, reproachfully and with horror; a painful smile strayed about her lips, a smile that was almost impercept-

ible, but convulsive, as of one who has received a wound, yet did not wish to complain.

“ M. Pavelyn remarking my hesitation, came to my assistance and said a few words to encourage me in continuing my task.

“ I began quietly, but with determination, to counsel her to marry. She bowed her head, and seemed to be listening to me with patience, if not with indifference.

“ I at first dwelt on Conrad de Somerghem's vast fortune, his high birth, and his good qualities, and was about to invoke the principal reason and speak of Rose's delicacy and the sorrow of her parents, when M. Pavelyn left the room. The poor child followed her father with her eyes, and contemplated me with a look that made me shudder, and stupefied me. How clear is the language of the soul !

“ Rose had not spoken, yet I understood word for word what she said to me. Alas!—she accused me of conspiring with her father, to do violence to her feelings. She reproached me with the cruel artifice with which I had voluntarily wounded her heart. I was very much overcome, and stammered forth some words of excuse; but she, with a calmness that mastered me, said softly:

“ ‘ It is well, Lionel. Go on; accomplish your mission—I will hear you to the end.’

“ There were tears ready to spring to my eyes; my heart was oppressed, the pallor of anguish overspread my countenance. Then fear made me violently resist my emotion. I called to my assistance

the consciousness of duty, and all the energy of my will. I resumed in trembling accents:

“‘Rose, you are ill. Your parents fear a great calamity! Ah, spare them the anguish which would shorten their days! They gave you life; all their hopes are centered in you. If consumption were to carry off their child, they would die of despair. If it be a sacrifice, a painful sacrifice even, that is exacted of you, accept it, I beseech you, through pity, through love for your good father, your tender mother.’

“I thought I had made some impression on Rose’s mind, but finding myself mistaken, I stopped.

“‘Unfortunate Lionel!’ she said, sighing, ‘why plunge the dagger in your heart and mine? Consumption, you say? But to make this marriage I should have to kill in my heart a sentiment which has become a part of my life. I prefer to die of consumption. Then at least I shall not profane the love that fills my soul. Then at least I will bear it away to the grave without having sullied it by a perjured promise.’

“I was so profoundly moved by this revelation of her heart’s secret: those terrible words, consumption, death, the grave, inspired me with such lively terror and so profound a pity, that tears coursed down my cheeks. I tried to speak, but my voice refused to leave my throat.

“‘Weep not, Lionel,’ said Rose; ‘the cruel fate weighing upon us cannot be overcome with tears. God has denied us happiness on earth; let us bow

our heads in resignation, and without complaint. It will perhaps kill me, but why believe there remains no hope after death? Is there not a second life?’

“Bewildered, beside myself, almost overcome by my grief, I cried out in a voice made unintelligible by sobs.

“‘No, no! you cannot die, Rose. Oh! Rose, listen to me! This marriage will break a heart whose every beat was a sigh for you; it must poison a life whose only aim was to love you; it must kill a soul who adored you as he did God. But it also will save you from the death that threatens you; it will spare your parents, my benefactors, from frightful despair; it will atone for our misguided love before high Heaven. Oh! Rose, by the memories of our childhood, by all I have hoped and suffered through my wild love, which was without limit, for her who made me an artist—oh! I beg of you, allow yourself to yield! Give me the only means of returning your father’s benefits, and do not deny me the hope that you will yet remain on earth to close his eyes. Ah! see, Rose, see! I beg it on my knees. Listen! and grant my prayer.’

“I fell upon my knees, weeping bitterly, holding out towards her my hands in supplication. A something had happened to her which stilled me. An extreme joy shone upon her countenance. The blessed, who see Heaven opened, do not wear a more celestial smile. While I reiterated my prayer more warmly, she held her hands out to me, and said:

“‘Ah! I was sure, but did not dare believe it altogether; now, I doubt no more. Thanks, thanks, Lionel! If God wills to take my life, now I can die!’

“I was suddenly overcome with terrible anguish. I jumped to my feet trembling, and bent down my head as a stifled sigh escaped me, for a door had opened, and M. Pavelyn saw me kneeling at his daughter’s feet! Yet this was not what agitated me for I could easily have explained my suppliant attitude; but in the look he gave me there was so much bitterness, and such deep, though contained anger, that I could not doubt he had discovered my love for his daughter.

“Without speaking, M. Pavelyn drew the bell-rope, and awaited the advent of a servant. It was an anxious moment. The silence of death reigned in the apartment. Rose held down her eyes; I was more dead than alive, and obliged to lean against the marble mantel-piece to keep my legs from giving way under me.

“A servant appeared:

“‘Go,’ said M. Pavelyn, ‘and tell Madame Pavelyn that Rose wishes her to come to her at once.’

“When the servant left, my irritated patron said to me, in a voice whose tone chilled my blood in my veins:

“‘Come, follow me; I must be alone with you.’

“As in my trouble and agitation I did not immediately obey, he seized my hand, and drew me from the room. Near the door I turned my head around involuntarily; it was my soul which, with a last

look, wished to bid an eternal farewell to the soul it loved. I saw Rose standing, her finger pointed upward, like a prophetess; her features were transfigured; hope and faith beamed in her eyes. She pointed to Heaven, and I knew she meant to bid me farewell until we met in the bosom of God.

“M. Pavelyn seemed painfully affected by his daughter’s attitude, for he tightened the grasp upon my wrist, and drew me with long strides to a distant chamber, the door of which he closed after him.

“Crushed beneath the weight of shame, I remained rooted to the spot where my benefactor had conducted me. He crossed his arms upon his breast, and regarded me silently. I could not bear the look, and allowed myself to drop into a chair, hiding my face—and my tears—with my hands.

“‘So this is my recompense!’ cried M. Pavelyn, in an altered voice. ‘This child I redeemed from poverty, whom I loved as a son, whom I loaded with benefits—this child was a serpent who crawled into the bosom of my family to poison my life. The son of a maker of wooden shoes, not content with lifting his eyes to the heiress of my fortune and name, would draw my only daughter into sharing his guilty love! Madman!—had not then gratitude power enough in your heart to stifle such an inclination? Did you not foresee that you were guilty of something both criminal and cowardly? What did you dare think? What did you dare hope? Ah, it is God’s curse!’

"I was as pale as death, I trembled and wrung my hands in despair. I held my arms out towards M. Pavelyn, stammering inarticulate words. My extraordinary emotion, my mortal anguish, and my despair which knew no limit, awakened some compassion in the heart of my benefactor, for it was with less anger that he continued:

"No, do not repeat the avowal of your guilty error. I heard all. Alas, may heaven forgive you for it! While I bestowed my friendship upon you, and dreamt day and night of your future, you spoke to my child of a love that will shorten all our lives, and cover our graves with unutterable shame.'

"The deep wound inflicted upon me by this accusation gave me back my speech. I endeavored in spite of my sobs to make M. Pavelyn understand that I had never before that fatal day betrayed by word or look the unhappy passion I felt for Rose. I told him how I had struggled and suffered, how I had returned to Bordeghem with the intention of never more treading the streets of Antwerp, and how my loss of flesh and fever were but the consequences of the desperate conflict I had waged against myself. Finally I knelt before my benefactor, and watering his feet with my tears, I implored his pity and pardon. I told him I wished to fly, were it to the ends of the earth, but I conjured him not to bear me down with his malediction. He lifted me up with a brief gesture, and replied:

"Unhappy one, I have so loved you that even now I can still believe in your innocence. I will

therefore make you no more useless reproaches. No one in the world, you say, knows of your wild love for Rose, nor of her weakness. This is great good fortune—yes, yes, for if any one had surprised this terrible secret, where should I go to hide my shame? How would my wife bear the weight of this misfortune? And Conrad de Somerghem, who knew himself to be rejected for a——. No, I will overcome my anger and indignation; it is a consolation to me that now at least you feel what inexorable duty demands of you. It is enough: silence, utter forgetfulness must bury this secret. You understand, I hope, that you must leave this house at once. Go, go far, very far, that we may none of us hear you mentioned any more—that my child, more especially, may forget even your very existence. I pray, I beseech you, Lionel, if you are grateful for my bounty, submit with a good will and conscientiously to this necessity. Money is necessary to travel: you shall want for nothing.’

“With these words he placed a purse beside me on the table; but I, overcome with so much goodness, flew towards him and took his hands, and wept bitter tears, exclaiming,

“Oh! thanks, thanks! I will pray God without ceasing that he will accord you His blessing! Farewell! be pitiful to the wretched man whose last sigh will be a cry of gratitude towards you. Oh! my God! Adieu—noble heart, generous patron, adieu!’

“As I uttered these words I fled—I precipitated

myself into the street like one blind and pursued by anguish and despair—I ran straight before me without knowing what I was doing. I left the town by the first gate I saw, and having reached the outskirts and found the world open before me, I gave a cry of joy and redoubled my speed, as if every step that carried me away from the home of my benefactor was to diminish the weight and horror of my crime.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“THE first day of my flight I fell with fatigue, near a little village not far from Brussels. Though I had refused the aid offered by my patron, I was not without money. I had three gold Napoleons and five francs in small change. After some moments’ rest I entered the village and sought out an inn. The next day by sunrise, I pursued my journey in the direction of France; for I thought in that great country, whose language I spoke, I would find better than elsewhere a means of hiding myself, and supporting my wretched life, without being heard of in Antwerp.

“After walking four days without stopping, I finally reached a far-away little village on French soil, in the environs of Compiègne. Now that a distance of fifty or sixty leagues lay between Rose and me, now that I was distant from all the principal routes of travel, and had nothing to fear as to the traces of my flight being discovered, I no longer felt the necessity to continue my travels. The people with whom I boarded did not trouble me with indiscreet questions, and were not astonished at my strange taciturnity.

“Around the village were many little valleys, where one could indulge in dreams quite at one’s ease, and a short distance off lay the Imperial forest

of Compi gne, where the wretched can hide themselves in utter solitude with their unhappy thoughts.

“It was frequently in the densest portion of the forest that I spent my days, sitting immovable many hours together, my eyes fixed on one point, and arms crossed on my breast, or else coming and going, laughing and sighing, watering the turf with my tears, until the midday clock or the obscurity of evening called me back to the village.

“I thought of my mother, M. Pavelyn, and my lost future. I felt remorse of conscience, and saw my benefactors weeping as their daughter faded away before their eyes; I heard a malediction fall from their lips against the ingrate whose insensate pride had caused the sorrow of their lives. But however frightful were the visions that passed before me, I found in my sick soul strength enough to dissipate them, and evoke in their stead another image, a resplendent and charming apparition. Then Rose appeared before me, born of the mist of the forest, with the smile of hope upon her lips, the fire of enthusiasm in her eyes, and pointing heavenward to me, as she had appeared on the occasion of our last and fatal parting. Then again, I would hear a plaintive voice, and across the branches seem to see the vaporous shadow of an angelic young girl. It was Rose’s soul which came to repeat the avowal of its love, ‘Better to die, better to die,’ she murmured in a whisper both touching and solemn. And then, in ecstasy and complete forgetfulness of the world, I felt happy above all other

men, and laughed in the depths of the solitary forest, like a poor fool who has lost consciousness of self.

“ In spite of the diseased condition of my mind, I thought of my mother with deep disquiet. She would not wonder during the first week of my absence at the length of time I remained in Antwerp; but finally would enquire about me, and then what a terrible blow would be hers on learning that I had disappeared without leaving any traces behind. I should and would write to her; but what was the letter to contain? I could not reveal the truth, for I wished with religious fidelity to fulfil the promise I made to my benefactor. Twenty times I leant over my paper to begin a letter to my mother filled with untruths, but they would not come from under my pen.

“ After a struggle which lasted four days, I finally yielded to an imperious necessity, and wrote to her. I told her with many protestations of love, while imploring her forgiveness, that I wished to make a trip to France, Germany, and Italy, to complete my artistic education; that I had left without bidding her farewell, fearing that they, my parents or M. Pavelyn, would prevent my carrying out my intention, one which had pursued me for more than a year and was the cause of my loss of health. I added that she must not be uneasy, as she would often have news of me; that I should always think of her with affection, and return as soon as possible with the firm intention of comforting her last days and making her happy.

“That my parents might not know where I had flown to, I took a post-chaise passing along the road, and was conducted as far as Rheims, where I posted my letter. By night I was back in the village.

“This letter to my mother had cost me unspeakable efforts, but now I had sent it, and I could hope my parents would be at least re-assured as to my existence, I felt my heart relieved of a great load, and my mind free to yield itself up, in entire forgetfulness, to constant revery.

“I should not for a long while have thought of leaving my solitary village, for I loved the forest of Compiègne and its shady walks; but I soon found my funds were melting away, and my strange habits remarked upon in the village and indiscreet questions asked me, which I did not like. I must therefore resolve to go away. Paris was the only point where I might have the hope of remaining unobserved and hidden away in a crowd, and find work as a sculptor, that I might escape the poverty which threatened me.

“Two days afterwards, I entered staff in hand the capital of France. During a week I lodged in a little furnished hotel, but then again reminded of economy by the sight of my last five franc-piece, I sought a less expensive habitation. I took possession of a small room under the roof of a high house in the Rue Montagne Ste. Geneviève behind the Pantheon; from there my eyes could embrace the entire panorama of the immense city, and my look

be lost for hours in the smoky atmosphere, as in the infinite. At my feet roared the thousands of carriages on their different errands, above me rustled the movement produced by a million of inhabitants; I even heard in the house which served me as an asylum, the song of happy people, the cry of children, and the calls of those walking up and down stairs; but all the noises were strange to me, and in the midst of Paris with its immense population, I felt further away from the world and more isolated than in the little village nestling near Compiègne.

“From the first hour I dwelt in that little room it became dear to me. What other home was better attuned to my saddened mind than these narrow quarters, hidden away under the roof of a house which was of itself a little world, but with a limitless horizon where my thoughts might wander at pleasure?

“If necessity had not put an end to my dreams, it appears to me I should have spent all my life looking out of the window. But there was no chance of my forgetting that poverty was beside me: I forcibly therefore dragged myself away from this enchanted spot, and went down into the street to obtain work from the master sculptors, as I had already done for some days without success.

“On this one I was to be more fortunate. I called upon a well-known sculptor who lived in a house on the Rue de Seine, telling him I was a young artist, one who had received the first prize at the

Antwerp academy, and who had come to Paris to perfect himself in his studies; but being without money, was obliged to seek work to enable me to live. My humility no doubt inspired him with confidence; for he asked no more questions, and conducted me at once into a large studio, where many young men, and some even of maturer years, were occupied in carving, both in wood and stone, several statutes and ornaments of all kinds. He called the chief of the work-room, and said something in a low voice, then turning towards me:

“‘You are going to be put through a test, my boy,’ he said; ‘to-night I will see what you know. If I am pleased, you shall have employment. Now get to work with a good will.’

“A small plaster model was brought me, representing an archangel, and a block of linden wood, out of which I was to carve the angel’s head as far as the throat, four times as large as the model. At the same time I was given all I required—a bench, tools, and even a gray blouse to protect my clothes.

“Towards evening I had almost completed the angel’s head, and was pleased with myself, for I was satisfied my attempt was a complete success; therefore, I worked with such ardor that I did not perceive that for some moments the sculptor was standing behind me, observing what I was doing.

“He tapped me on the shoulder, and said with a pleasant smile:

“‘Oh, oh! my fine fellow, you dare correct the model! Never mind, I like that, when courage goes

hand in hand with talent. I am satisfied, you shall work for me; and that you may see I desire well to young artists like yourself, I will give you the salary of a first-class workman.'

"From that day I was employed in the large workshop with numerous companions. There was an order for a church in the city of Bordeaux—a large altar, with all its statues and ornaments. The work was behindhand, and was needed. It was to this I owed my immediate admission.

"As soon as I entered the workroom, my comrades had sought to know who I was. They at first overlooked my prudence and reserve, but finally my continued silence wearied them, and I became more and more the object of their raillery, if not of their dislike. This hostile attitude troubled me; I made every effort to be somewhat more unreserved and agreeable to them, but it was vain. I could not dispel the impressions which even when at work with ardor, were ever present to my mind. Sad thoughts carried the day—Rose, always Rose, who pointed to heaven as the home of poor wretches banished from love, and who muttered in my ear, 'Better to die, better to die.'

"When work was over and I free, I flew like a bird escaped from its cage towards the Montagne de St. Geneviève, and seated myself beside my little window, and watched the reflections of evening with wandering eyes—and I dreamed of her, of her smile and her avowal, or else I thought of her illness, her poor mother's sorrow, and wept and

prayed God with uplifted hands to pardon me through His infinite mercy. And I only left my favorite place when fatigue compelled me to retire, that I might renew my strength.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I HAD already worked for two months with my comrades towards the completion of the high altar.

"One day the sculptor sent for me to come to his private studio. He showed me a plaster cast which, by its symbolic anchor could be recognized as the personification of Hope, and told me to examine it attentively, as he wished to have my advice.

"‘Well,’ he said, after some moments, ‘what do you think of the statue?’

"‘As far as it goes, I find it extremely handsome,’ I replied, timidly.

"‘As far as it goes?’ he repeated, ‘there is then a reservation? Come, speak out openly; I did not ask you to come here to receive praise. There is something wanting to the rough model; if you can find out what it is, you will be doing me a great favor, for it begins to bother me greatly.’

"‘My talent is too limited,’ I muttered, ‘for me to criticise so beautiful a work; yet I see that had I undertaken it, my mind would have interpreted it less well, no doubt, but other than this.’

"‘But how would you have interpreted it? That is precisely what I want to know,’ cried the master, with impatience.

"I explained to him, that according to my mind

the material beauty sought for by the Greeks corresponded with their manners and their religion; that Christianity, looking upon the body as dust, had rather for its end in art to picture the emotions of the immortal soul. The model of the statue of Hope, were it my work, would therefore not so much resemble a Greek divinity. I should make her more human—too human, perhaps.

“My master seemed to take pleasure in listening to my words: he drew from me still another observation on the face of the statue. I tried to make him understand, with great reserve, that I found the expression too passionless and cold, and wanting in warmth towards Him who is the source of all hope. I insensibly allowed myself to be carried away by my feelings; one of my heart-chords had been touched, which only needed this to make it vibrate with vehemence. I represented hope as the sole source of all faith, of all religion, and all joy—for if the Creator had not let that lightning spark of hope into man’s heart, where would the latter find the power and strength to endure the sacrifices, the pains and the labors of life, if he did not know that a Supreme Being would take into account these labors and these sufferings?

“My master was deeply touched by my enthusiastic language, and yet, while telling me that I allowed myself to become excited almost to exaggeration, he pressed my hand with sincere satisfaction.

“He explained why this model troubled him, as

he had told me. A very rich banker, possessing a magnificent cabinet of works of art, had ordered from him this marble statue of Hope, to be placed among several choice pieces of sculpture. This banker, originally a German, was a very religious man. He had other ideas about art than those that generally prevail in France. Several times already he had come to see the statue modelled, and had each time appeared dissatisfied, spite of the many alterations my master had made. The banker held about it the same ideas as myself as to the requirements of what we call Christian art, and this greatly astonished the master; however, he was very anxious to please the rich amateur, and begged me to tell him at once, in more precise terms, and more in detail, how I thought that the pose, the expression and the form of the statue should be, that it might answer the wishes of the banker.

“I talked so long and counselled so many changes, that finally no portion of his composition had escaped my criticism; yet as I spoke with great respect, my frankness did not wound the sculptor. He pensively shook his head and said:

“‘You men of the north understand art differently from what we do now in France. Who is right? Who is wrong? We will let the question stand. At any rate, I am growing old, and it is not at my age one changes one’s ideas and one’s eyes. It seems impossible to me to please the banker; and yet I would be deeply grieved were I to forfeit his esteem and lose his high patronage.’”

“There was a moment's silence. ‘But my brave boy,’ suddenly asked my master, ‘were I to ask you to make a study after your own ideas, would you imprint upon it your conception of what characterizes Christian art?’

“‘I dare hope so, as far as the idea goes at least. As to the form and proportion of the different parts, your master hand must correct them, for in that respect I am yet a novice and inexperienced.’

“‘Ah! this I understand,’ cried the sculptor. ‘To-morrow I leave for Bordeaux with each part of the altar finished. To have it placed in the church I shall be gone at least eight days. There is upstairs a small room in which I sometimes work. I shall have clay taken up, and you will make your model there. The room has a bell, the apprentice will come at your call to receive your orders. You will keep the key of the room about you. I shall give orders that you are not to be disturbed. I hope you will make good use of your time, and advance the model as much as possible. I am curious to see what you are able to do. Well then, everything is arranged, isn't it?—to-morrow you set to work, and will fashion me a Christian Hope.’

“I promised to do my best to obtain his approbation.

“The next day I manipulated the clay with ardor, for I was so excited, and beheld my ideal so distinctly and so alive before my eyes, that I considered it unnecessary to model a small figure as a guide to my work.

“What should my statue be? Where would I find my inspiration? But who other than myself on earth had seen the incarnation of hope in human form? Rose!—Rose with her finger pointing heavenward, with all her soul in her eyes, with her countenance beaming and illumined by the hope of a better life, lifted to God, the source of all hope! Oh! I still remained an artist! All the vivacity of my imagination had returned; I only thought of my work, and felt so happy and so lifted up that without being aware of it I wet with tears of joy the clay that I worked beneath my feverish fingers. And how should it be otherwise? What I was doing was the embodiment of my love, of my faith and hope! Rose was here before me, the artist’s angelic inspiration! And I while working felt near to her and in more intimate communication with her spirit than in my most deceitful dreams. Thus the clay took shape as if by enchantment in my hands. Were I possessed of twenty arms, I could not have gone faster!

“But when I had entirely finished modelling my statue, with the character that belonged to it, yet roughly fashioned, a difficulty which I had vainly essayed to guard against disquieted me. Not only was the attitude of my statue and its enthusiastic expression that of Rose at the time she bade me farewell until we were to meet in heaven, but it was so exactly her figure, that my hand had involuntarily engraved on her features and emaciated limbs, the seal of her languor. My statue therefore was too thin in form, and too attenuated.

“I struggled a long while to correct this defect, and finally in part succeeded, and my model acquired a certain roundness, at least sufficiently so to take from it its attenuated appearance.

“I then began working with more confidence and ardor, and hurried on to its completion with such activity that I spent the greater part of the eighth day in contemplating my work with delight, seeing in it nothing more to correct.

“My master had returned in the afternoon. I recognized his voice on the stairway, and awaited with throbbing heart his opening the door of my room. What would his opinion be?

“At last he appeared, and cried out as soon as he saw me:

“‘Well, my boy, did you succeed? Have you worked well? Come, let us see how you understand Christian Hope.’

“Saying this, he approached my statue; but he drew back, struck by some sentiment I could not account for, contemplated it a moment as he talked to himself, then flew towards me, took my hand, pressed it warmly, and said in a voice full of emotion:

“‘Why you are an artist—a great artist! The form is somewhat slim; but this is nothing—I will correct that. Your inspiration is too just, and you have too much cleverness, not to acquire with time a great reputation. Poor boy, you are losing your time here, carving wood and stone to buy a piece of bread! This is not right—to every one accord-

—to every one accord—

ing to his merits. I shall procure for you the means of making yourself known; and, while you are waiting, from this day I shall double your salary. As long as you remain here you shall not be my workman, but my friend; we will hold converse on art together. I will bring my experience, and you the enthusiasm of your young, warm heart. We will both be the better for it.'

"I thanked my generous master with tears in my eyes; but he gave me no time to express what I felt.

" 'I shall run to the banker's,' he cried. 'He must come, this very minute; it would be very strange were he not pleased now. Throw away those bits of clay, and draw the curtain—your statue does not receive enough light.'

"With these words he went down stairs four steps at a time, leaving me the prey to an emotion emanating from both pride and joy.

"After waiting for about a half hour, I heard the noise of ascending steps towards the story which contained my study. I retired to a corner of the room, to be out of the way of all, and seated myself in front of a table, making a pretence at drawing.

"I heard a cry of admiration from the banker, who said to my master:

" 'It is beautiful! I congratulate you. You have at last understood better than I what I wanted—accept my sincere thanks. Oh, nature lives! and what an expression!—what a soaring upwards towards God! Yes, yes, this is how Christian Hope should be represented.'

“‘And suppose I tell you I am not the author of this statue?’ replied my master.

“‘What do you mean?’ said the banker, surprised.

“‘I would change some things,’ replied the sculptor. ‘The figure is too thin, and here and there are small details to be corrected; but I do not want to arrogate merit that is not mine. The author of the statue you admire is the young man you see drawing at the table’—and turning towards me, he cried, ‘Come here, my friend, and receive yourself the praises that belong legitimately to you.’

“I obeyed. The banker advanced towards me, and began praising me warmly and extolling my work. Confused and overcome, I kept my eyes lowered, but my master tapped me sharply on the shoulder, and cried:

“‘Oh, M. Lionel, you are like a timid young girl. Lift up your head and look bravely before you, as an artist like yourself has a right to do.’

“The banker rubbed his forehead, muttering:

“‘M. Lionel!—it would be strange!—who knows? In truth, master, I know all your pupils, but this young man I have never before seen here. Your name then is Lionel?’ he asked, addressing himself to me. ‘Excuse my want of discretion, I beg of you. What country do you belong to? In what town do your parents dwell? What is your family name?’

“I answered these questions honestly.

“‘This is marvelous!’ he said. ‘Had it not been

for the statue, I would perhaps never have discovered you. Yet for the last two weeks you have been sought for in all the studios and museums of Paris; but who would have supposed I should find you in a house where I knew everybody? I have a letter for you—a very urgent letter; it comes from a rich merchant in Antwerp; however, you must know him—M. Pavelyn is his name. I cannot tell what he wants with you, but he begs I will not lose a moment in handing you the letter when I discover your whereabouts. I promised him I would do all I could to fulfil his urgent wish. I shall send my servant, who awaits me below, to ask my head clerk for the letter; he will go for it in a conveyance, and be back directly.'

"Going down to give his orders, he returned immediately to the workshop. Again he contemplated my statue, praised each one of the points he claimed to discover in it, talked with me of Pagan art, Gothic art, and modern art, and promised me his all-powerful protection.

"He was here interrupted by the arrival of his valet, who handed him a sealed letter, which he gave to me at once.

"It was indeed M. Pavelyn's handwriting on the envelope. I was trembling and pale with anxious curiosity as I opened the letter. But as soon as I read the first lines a cloud obscured my vision, I gave a piercing cry, my knees gave way under me, and I lost consciousness at the base of my statue.

“My master took me in his arms, the servant who brought the letter went for water and began to bathe my brow; but I had not fainted entirely away, and begged that they would give me air. I could not believe the writing that lay open at my feet, and my first impulse was to take it and carry it to my eyes again. I read aloud the frightful words which had made me succumb to my agony and terror.

“‘Come, come quickly, Lionel. Alas! she is marching rapidly towards the tomb. One only hope remains to us; your presence alone may perhaps recall her to life. Come—my poor Rose calls for you night and day!’

“I read no more: with another cry I tore from me my grey blouse and seized my clothes.

“‘What is the matter with you? What are you going to do?’ exclaimed my master, frightened by the vehemence of my movements.

“‘I am going, I must go!’ I cried. ‘She is dying! She calls to me! Adieu!’

“‘She is dying? Who?’ they asked. “‘Over there—she! Hope—my statue,’ I shrieked like a madman.

“My master placed himself before the door and barred the way.

“‘Poor boy!’ he said; ‘I cannot allow you to go in this way—your mind is unsettled.’

“I said, beseeching him, my hands clasped together—‘Oh! no, no, you are mistaken; I am not mad. Judge, judge for yourselves! I was a poor dumb child. Another child, the daughter of rich people,

raised me from poverty, taught me, and made an artist of me. On reaching womanhood she loved her protégé so devotedly, that her life is the forfeit! She may even now be extended on her death-bed; she calls on me to save her or close her eyes. And should I not fly at this cry of distress? Ah! I pray, I conjure you, let me go!’

“‘I understand,’ replied my master, his eyes suffused with tears; ‘but at least you shall not return to Antwerp on foot. Have you any money?’

“‘Money?’ I stammered, struck by the question. ‘Money?’ In my room—a little, perhaps.’

“The generous artist drew some Napoleons from his pocket, slipped them into my hand, and said,

“‘Take these; may God protect you during your journey. Go as soon as possible; we will settle afterwards.’

“Scarcely did I see the door opened before me when I precipitated myself towards the stairs with a cry of joy, and flew into the street.

“Two hours later I was in the post chaise which carried me back to Belgium.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“AFTER a rapid journey, which appeared terribly slow measured by my feverish anxiety, I reached Antwerp in the afternoon, and jumped out of the post-chaise before it had fairly stopped, and ran breathlessly towards M. Pavelyn’s house ; but there I learned from a servant that the family had been about ten days at Bordeghem, in the hope that country air would somewhat strengthen the invalid.

“Without losing a moment, I ran to a livery stable and had two good horses harnessed to a light carriage. I promised double pay—and in a quarter of an hour we raced over the high road to Bordeghem with the velocity of the wind.

“I stopped the carriage in front of the grating of the chateau, threw a gold piece to the driver, and hastened into the garden. At the door of the chateau a servant saluted me with a cry of joy, and conducted me quickly into the vestibule, and without saying a word opened a room door and exclaimed—‘Here is M. Lionel!’

“Three or four voices replied with joyful cries at this announcement. I saw Rose rise up suddenly from her invalid sofa, all cushioned. I saw my mother, who held one of the poor sick girl’s hands. I saw M. and Madame Pavelyn, whose faces were radiant with joy at my appearance. But Rose!

Alas ! how altered she was by illness ; her cheeks were hollow, her eyes glazed, and her lips blue. It was then true that death had marked her out as his victim, and I had only come to see her die.

“ This thought filled me with deep despair ; I felt my limbs give way under me ; I tried to speak, but it almost appeared as if I had become again dumb.

“ I vainly moved my lips, no sound escaped—a torrent of tears fell from my eyes, and I dropped upon a chair overcome with weakness ; my head hidden in my hands, which were resting on the edge of the table.

“ I heard Rose’s sweet weak voice speaking words of comfort to me ; I felt my mother’s arms endeavoring to raise my head to imprint a tender kiss upon it ; M. Pavelyn clasped my hand, and endeavored to withdraw me from my pain by the expression of the warmest affection ; but I remained insensible to everything, and only replied with sobs, until the moment when Rose whispered in my ear in accents of ardent prayer :

“ ‘ Thank you, Lionel, for your tears ; but at least take pity on my poor mother—you cruelly wound her heart ! For love of me, take courage and be comforted about my condition.’

“ These words recalled me somewhat to myself. I made an effort to overcome my pain, and lifted my head. While silent tears still fell from my eyes, I tried to explain my lively emotion as being caused by the ineffable sense of happiness I felt at the sight of my benefactors and my mother, which

had quite overcome me. But Rose interrupted this embarrassed explanation and said, pointing to a chair beside her:

“Come, Lionel, and sit near me. I cannot talk to you when you are so far off—it tires my chest.

“When I had obeyed her, she looked at me with a radiant smile, and gazed into my eyes with deep tenderness. Love and happiness illumined her pale face; but this composure, this joy lighting up her faded features, struck me anew with anguish, and I bent my head upon my breast.

“‘It makes you very sorry to see me ill,’ she said, in a voice both calm and cheerful. ‘Ah! had you not come I should probably have been without strength to hope for a longer life; but now you are here, I feel already better. My heart beats more easily; there is a something, a secret presentiment of a return of strength, which tells me I shall escape consumption. You shall see by to-morrow. I want to be able to walk in the garden with you and my good mother. We will speak of our childhood, and evoke our sweetest memories; we will enjoy the good weather, and admire the beauty of beneficent nature. In this way I shall forget my illness, and strength will be restored gradually to me. Yes, yes! Lionel, I am assured of it—the sight of you alone is enough to cure me. Be courageous, all of you who love me so tenderly, for the day of my deliverance is at hand.’

“These words, uttered in the accents of firm conviction, made a great impression on her parents

and me. I began to waver in my terrible fear; the joyous smile which lightened my face betrayed the tender hope that filled my heart.

“Rose still talked a little longer with the same exalted faith, until she saw no more tears in her mother’s eyes, and she thought to have softened the impression produced by my despair. Then she began asking me about my journey, and wished to know, with the fullest details, how I had lived during my long absence, and what had happened to me.

“To induce me to give a circumstantial account of it, she pretended there was no better way to cure a sick person than to divert her. While I talked, she interrupted me often by happy remarks and jokes, and seemed so gay that I began to think I was uselessly alarmed, and there was no reason to despair of a speedy cure.

“M. and Madame Pavelyn listened, their eyes sparkling with happiness; and it was evident they more than I believed they could take comfort in this new-born hope.

“My benefactor took part in the conversation. He was extremely affectionate, and showed me, in spite of his grief, he had not ceased to love me.

“As I had reached Bordeghem very late in the afternoon, twilight soon took the place of day. While we forgot our pain and disquietude in a conversation full of charm and comfort, Rose astonished us by her vivacity, her courage, her gayety. Her lips had recovered their natural hue from the

circulation of warmer blood. Her eyes glistened with joy, there was in her words and gestures so much spirit and strength, that she no longer showed any other symptoms of illness but the extreme attenuation of her cheeks and body.

“At this moment came the doctor, who was making his daily visit. He also appeared surprised at the favorable change which had taken place in Rose’s appearance, and he shook his head smiling.

“After warmly bidding me welcome, as to an old acquaintance, he approached the sick girl, and felt her pulse for the space of several minutes.

“Then he said, in a voice betraying some anxiety: ‘What excitement in the blood! This new strength is astonishing. Let us hope a favorable reaction may now take place; but if we did not put a stop to this too great agitation while there is yet time, it might become fatal. Mademoiselle Rose is very much fatigued, though she does not appear so. She must rest now; so, M. Lionel, you who have the most power over yourself, must now leave her, and you, Mademoiselle, put off until to-morrow the pleasure of conversing with him. You will then probably be strong enough to resume without fatiguing yourself beyond measure the entertainment I am now obliged to interdict.’

“We were all convinced the doctor was giving us very sensible advice; for now that our attention had been called to it, we could not conceal from ourselves that Rose was in a condition of extreme nervousness.

“My mother urged the pretext that my father, who had gone to a neighboring village for wood, must be back home again, and I could no longer let him remain in ignorance of my return.

“Rose besought me with clasped hands to come and see her the next day very early. Her blue eyes beamed upon me a smile of celestial sweetness. M. Pavelyn again pressed my hand, and I walked, consoled and, almost happy, by my mother’s side towards our home.

CHAPTER XXX.

“THE next day, after a night disturbed by dreams full of hope and uncertainty, I rose with the light of dawn; but ardent as was my desire to be with Rose, I remained with my parents to tell them of my flight, and the position I had reached.

“I felt, and my mother had made me understand it thoroughly, that Rose was very much fatigued, and I could not break upon her necessary rest by too early a visit.

“The village clock struck nine when at last I dared turn my steps towards the chateau.

“From afar, as I entered, I saw Rose seated under a shady elm in company with her mother. This proof that the emotion of the day before had done her no harm, made me so happy that I gave a triumphant cry.

“While I expressed my joy and hope, Rose motioned me to a seat beside her.

“After Madame Pavelyn had exchanged some words with us, she rose and went away, under the pretext of seeking for something in the house.

“As soon as she was out of sight, Rose said to me:

“‘Lionel, I begged my mother to leave us alone together. I could not converse openly with you yesterday: let us do so now. Tell me, if during

this sad separation you ever thought of me—thought a great deal of me?’

“‘Oh, Rose!’ I sighed, ‘in what should life consist, but to think of you—you alone, night and day? That you should doubt it, grieves me.’

“‘No, no, don’t let it trouble you, Lionel,’ she replied, smiling. ‘I was wrong to put this question, for I know what you have suffered and what thoughts preyed upon your mind; my spirit went forth with you in your travels. I saw your tears flow in solitude, I heard your lips murmur my name; I saw you smile when my image appeared before you. Do not let this astonish you, Lionel; to count your heart-beats, however great the distance between us I had but to place my hand on my own heart, and I feel assured its slightest pulsation found an echo in yours. Our two lives form but one.’

“Trembling with emotion, I clasped my hands together and stammered forth ardent words of gratitude.

“Rose’s voice was so gentle, contentment illumined her pale face with so exquisite a radiance, that her words fell upon my beating heart like drops of beneficent dew.

“There must have been thoughts in Rose’s mind she did not give expression to, for instead of replying to what I was talking about she suddenly said:

“And suppose my illness had carried me off before your return, Lionel, would you have always remembered your childhood’s friend?—and have

awaited with impatience that God should call you to Himself, that you might lie beside her in the cemetery?’

“‘Oh! do not speak of such dreadful things,’ I cried. You are already better to-day; you will recover, there is no doubt of it; but you must make some effort to rid yourself of this fear which is without foundation. Do it at all events, through pity for me.’

“‘I have lately had a strange dream,’ she said, ‘which only lasted about half the night, and yet made me live twenty years and more into futurity. I was dead. Do not agitate yourself, Lionel, it was only a vision in my sleep. I also had wept, had shuddered at the thought of death, for I thought it would separate me from all that are dear to me on earth. How mistaken I was! From the bosom of God my sight extended to the uttermost limits of the universe. My existence had become so entire, so perfect, and so multiple, that my soul without leaving Heaven could live amongst my parents and sorrowing friends. It was here in this corner of the world where is my dear Bordeghem, that my soul looked down. My tomb was behind the little church. I could see some one—some one, perhaps, I had loved too dearly upon earth—sowing the flowers of memory over my mortal remains; and I seemed to see him thus every day for many years. I often stood beside him; I did not hear what he said, but could perceive the slightest emotion of his heart, as if he himself had distinctly described it.

He also had a consciousness of my presence, for his eyes followed me as he smiled upon my invisible shadow; and when I wished to console him, to give him confidence in our two souls meeting eternally, he replied to my secret inspiration, as if human lips had spoken for his consolation. Death had not separated the happy soul from that which was still in pain!

“I was pale, and shuddered, as I heard Rose’s words. I felt the tears rise from my overcharged heart into my eyes; but her voice was so calm and stirring that I overcame my sorrow, and fixed my look upon her glistening eyes, full of respect mingled with awe. It was evident she did not say all these sad and strange things without an object, and I foresaw with anxiety some frightful development.

“‘Lionel,’ she said, ‘yesterday you shuddered with affright at the first sight you had of my attenuated face; you saw the image of death at my side, did you not? Why do you fear death? You believe in a better life, do you not? Let men’s bodies return to earth—the souls of those that fear God, will they not meet in the eternal home?’

“She ceased speaking and seemed to await my affirmative answer; but I had not the strength to reply, and with head bowed down wept silently.

“‘Forgive me, Lionel,’ she said. ‘If I fill your heart with sorrow, it is to spare you greater pain when what is mortal of me will have passed away and be no longer able to comfort you—for Lionel, when you say I shall get well, you express your hope,

don't you, and not your conviction? You think me cruel and pitiless. If it were not out of compassion to you, it would be selfish, the way I speak now. I accept the feeble hope of being cured with which all endeavor to inspire the poor invalid ; but I wish, if it pleases God to call me to himself, to close my eyes without wavering in my faith, joyful and triumphant in the powerlessness of death ! You weep with sorrow for the fate which threatens me, Lionel ! Ah ! tell me, if your fears are realized and my dream should become true—promise me you will watch over my grave, and hold Rose in loving remembrance until the end of your life. Let my soul carry away the hope that cruel oblivion will never break the ties that unite it to yours. Tell me that my death, if I am to go, will not grieve you—that faith, unbroken faith in an eternity of happiness will give you the strength to bid me farewell when the solemn moment comes, with a smile on your lips, as we bid farewell to a friend who precedes us on a delightful journey.

“ I was crushed beneath the weight of my agony, and struggled desperately against the thought Rose wished to make me admit ; and yet I felt that in spite of myself, the idea of death entered insistently into my mind and mastered my soul. The fear inspired by this terrible conviction made me tremble, and I dared not speak.

“ Rose implored in a sweet and plaintive voice one word of assent, and said that all the price she asked for her long suffering, and the mortal struggle

against her love, for pining away as she did, was the promise that she should remain dear to me after death.

“This was entreated for with such urgency that I made her the desired promise, and impelled by my growing enthusiasm, declared I could live alone in thinking of her. I spoke with such warmth, that I persuaded her my last sigh would still be breathed in memory of her.

“She took my hand, and said with extreme joy :

“‘Now let us believe I may be better. I will be calm, and have the strength to wait. Though God may decide that I must die, death will not divide us.’

“From that time, Rose lent a willing ear to all the encouragement I gave her, to banish from her mind the thought of her last end. We talked of our happy childhood for a while, and all that had smiled upon us during the course of our lives.

“When Madame Pavelyn returned to draw our attention to the fact that the sun was already very high, and the heat might injure Rose, the traces of tears had disappeared from my face, and I was composed enough to reassure Rose’s mother by words wherein breathed an assured confidence. We re-entered the house.

“I remained all day at the chateau talking with Rose and her parents about everything that could be of any interest to them, and diminish or dissipate their fears.

“Twice more, accident left me alone with Rose. She each time tried to strengthen in my heart her

abiding faith in the powerlessness of death. She was destined to exercise over me a great influence, for when night came, and Rose, who felt very much fatigued, retired to rest, I left the chateau, a smile on my lips, and this smile was only one of triumph, cast in the face of death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“For some days Rose recovered by degrees a little more strength and spirits, as she succeeded by means of perpetual recurrence to it in communicating to me her strange longing for death.

“And indeed, though I still held the hope to see her recover, the thought that she might die did not always strike me with terror. There were even times when, like Rose herself, I only looked upon death as an event which without interrupting life frees the soul from its natural bonds, and puts it in possession of the infinite power which it owes to its divine essence.

“So that if Rose was to give up her life, she would still see me, hear me, and know the thoughts of my heart; she would be with me and never leave me until the time when I could in my turn fall asleep in the eternal slumber of the body.

“What were to me a few years of waiting, if these years were illumined by the light of memory?—if I were sustained in this short exile, by the certainty of her presence? And how much greater would our joy be in Heaven, when once more reunited for all eternity! Such were the thoughts ever passing through my brain. It is true that frequently the fear of death made me shudder, and that when alone tears streamed from

my eyes ; but this was only the final struggle of my terrestrial nature against the inward fear of its annihilation.

“ Finally, under the influence of Rose’s exalted language, I went so far in this way of looking at death and futurity that I learned to talk for hours with perfect calmness, and even a sort of happy quietude, of things which make men tremble, and which once would have made me faint away with horror and pain.

“ There might have been something exaggerated in this superstition ; it might, perhaps, be almost inexplicable that in so short a time I could have educated my mind to a supernatural idea of eternity ; but even if Rose were mistaken, her influence over me was so absolute that she could have inspired me with a blind faith in things that had no existence. And what art, what irresistible eloquence, did she not use to stifle every doubt which rose within me ! I had no need to speak, she read my thoughts in my eyes ; she intuitively felt what I felt, hearing my very heart-beats ; for she replied to all my hesitation, combated my uncertainty, and dissipated every doubt, before I could even suspect myself what thoughts were about to be awakened in my mind.

“ Since our souls had reached so perfect an accord, not the slightest sorrow had come to cloud our minds. There was something almost divine in our intercourse—something supernatural—that sometimes carried us so far that we conversed as

though our souls were disembodied, and ever united in the eternal home.

“One day, however, Rose appeared grave and taciturn.

“When I caused a smile to break over her face, it almost immediately vanished; she seemed absent-minded, and it was easy to see that she did not feel as well as the day before.

“Her parents began to fear that the improvement in her condition would not continue. The noble girl made immense efforts at self-control, affecting great gayety and confidence that she might comfort her mother. I read in her eyes that one absorbing thought pursued her, and I endeavored to discover what this was. But she avoided not without embarrassment replying to my questions, and resisted my importunity for two days, trying to make me believe her sadness was only a consequence of her nervous agitation.

“During the morning of the third day I found her seated in her invalid's chair under the shadow of the lindens. She was alone. I asked her how she felt, and if she had slept well the night before. For a little while we continued talking about her illness; but I soon saw her thoughts were elsewhere, and she listened inattentively.

“‘Rose,’ I sighed in accents of sad reproach, ‘do you keep secrets from me? There is something troubles you, and you refuse to let me share your pain?’

“‘No, Lionel,’ she answered, ‘I have no secrets

from you, and I wanted to be alone that I might confide to you the anxiety that has robbed my soul of its peace. It is terrible enough, this fear which for two days has arisen within me, and which has become an insurmountable terror. I have something to beg of you—a great sacrifice to ask; you will grant it, Lionel?’

“I assured her it would cost me nothing to satisfy her slightest wish, and awaited with a certain anxiety the confidence she promised.

“‘Lionel,’ she said, ‘for three days and nights a horrible thought rises up before my eyes like a phantom. The inclination we have for each other was born in our hearts without our knowledge. We combated, we struggled, and could not conquer it: at least we think so. But in this combat did we really bring all our strength to bear to the uttermost? And suppose it were true, that while struggling we inwardly nourished and caressed this sentiment of love, we would be guilty; the tie that binds our souls would be but unworthy weakness, a wild error. Oh, Lionel! I shall soon appear before God!’

“I endeavored to tranquilize her by pointing out the chastity and purity of our love. I proved to her with complete conviction that such a sentiment, disengaged from all earthly desire, could not be culpable, and that if really we had not struggled up to the end against the wishes of our hearts, God in His sovereign justice would not constitute it a crime in His poor weak creatures.

“ ‘There is something else that troubles me ; you promised, Lionel, never to cease to think of me after my death—but if the material events of life force you to work, if you are obliged to seek the means of subsistence far away from here, such as your humble Bordeghem cannot offer, how can you remain faithful to your memories ? How will you watch over my grave ? And my soul in Heaven, will it not see you wandering over the earth, with a heart made cold by the cares of life which have effaced its memories ?’

“ It was not easy to find words sufficiently persuasive to thoroughly combat her doubts.

“ I renewed my promises, and swore that each of my heart-beats would bring back her memory, and the desire to be reunited with her in the bosom of God.

“ She seemed to awaken from a dream and cried. ‘Lionel, before I die I should like to be your wife.’

“ These words caused me to shudder and pale. Was it surprise, or fear, or joy ?

“ I know not, but I was completely overcome and, exclaimed, as I lifted up my hands to Heaven.

“ ‘My God ! Rose, what is this you say. My wife. You ? On earth ?’

“ ‘You see, Lionel,’ she resumed, with solemn calmness, ‘if the law had united us, and the priest’s blessing had sanctified our love, our affection would not only be legitimized in the eyes of the world, but also in those of God, in whose name we would be indissolubly united. Then I could appear with-

out fear before His awful throne. I can love you in the spirit world, and you will be able to hold my memory here with pious faith, for I will watch over my husband, and you will think of the marriage that heaven itself has blessed.'

"My heart beat with enthusiasm and admiration. Rose would be my wife! Our souls would receive the ineffaceable seal of the union of souls.

" 'And moreover,' continued Rose, 'this marriage would preserve my memory from all weakness in your heart; for Lionel, I wish to live in your thoughts without your having to struggle against material wants. If I become your wife, you would consent, would you not, to receive from my hands the dowry which would give you the means to remain ever faithful to my memory until the hour of your deliverance strikes?'

"I stammered forth some words of gratitude and happiness, but I suggested to her that her parents would not receive with pleasure this strange and sad request.

"She replied that she had already spoken of it to her mother, and was convinced her father would consent with joy. She did not wish to insist, however, and endeavored to point out that what she required of me was a great sacrifice; that if I felt the least hesitation, or could imagine any objection, I must not grant her petition of uniting myself forever to a woman who would soon be under the cold, damp ground of the cemetery: but if my tenderness were sufficiently deep and devoted to consecrate my life

to the dead, she asked my consent as the greatest proof of love I could give her.

“Touched unto tears, I assured her that I had never dared hope for so much happiness, and the priest’s blessing in sanctifying our love would also bring me inexpressible joy.

“She looked into my eyes with the brightness of excitement on her face, and continued:

“‘Now, Lionel, you will no longer see about me any trace of sorrow. I will await with joyful hope the solemn moment of our marriage; and if God permits me to live until then—impotent death may come. It can neither alarm me nor make me sorrowful, for it will break nothing, will weaken nothing, and divide nothing. Come, Lionel, let us now go in. After dinner, when you have left, I will speak to my father of our approaching union. Great Heavens! what happiness, what joy! To walk as I do now, on my betrothed’s arm, to feel myself sustained by him who shortly will be my husband.’

“We went in. M. and Madame Pavelyn saw with astonishment the change that had taken place in Rose’s appearance; she did not cease smiling, and seemed rejoiced, as if health had suddenly returned to her.

“At mid-day, when I left the chateau to go to my parents, Rose gave me yet one more look of intelligence, as if to assure me her desire would infallibly be accomplished.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ROSE spoke that very day to her parents of her wish to be united to me by the ties of marriage. Her father, who would willingly have made the greatest of sacrifices to spare her the smallest pain, had without objection agreed to all she desired, and even besought me not to refuse his poor daughter this satisfaction. He hoped the joy of thus seeing her dearest wish accomplished would renew Rose’s courage and strength to struggle victoriously against her cruel malady.

“A strange thing, though !—the next day we remarked that Rose had decidedly grown worse. Her eyes had lost their light, her lips were discolored, and there was in her glassy expression something humid, attesting that her vital forces were weakened.

“Was what Rose had told me so often indeed true? The improvement we had seemed to see in her appearance had only been delusive. By a superhuman effort over herself, she had gathered up all her strength of mind to make the thought of her death seem sweet and familiar to me, and all that remained to her of this dying energy she had employed in inducing her parents and myself to consent to this marriage.

“Now that this last wish was granted, she gave

way, and in a single night the disease had reasserted itself in all its violence, and was developing with new force.

“Rose, however, smiled and conversed gayly. No sorrowful thought cast a shadow over her face, and though her body was more and more consumed by sickness, her mind retained its calmness, she was quiet and wonderfully vivacious.

“Most truly, the certainty that Rose would die alarmed me no more, and I conversed tranquilly with her for entire days about her departure for another country; but yet there were times when her deathly pallor and painful cough made me shudder in spite of myself, and awakened within me a sense of great commiseration. She read the very depths of my heart. As soon as the slightest painful thought possessed me, she fixed her eyes on mine with a look of tender reproach, and recalled me to a disdain of corporeal death, and the most lively faith in the soul's eternal life.

“M. and Madame Pavelyn realized with the deepest anguish that they had allowed themselves to be deceived by a vain hope. Every time they looked at their child and saw, so to say, from hour to hour, the progress of the disease, their tears fell freely; but they too felt the irresistible influence of Rose's confidence without limit, and the wonderful brightness of her mind. At last they seemed to await with a degree of resignation the fatal parting, and ceased to weep so bitterly.

“In the interval, the preparations for our marriage were made in great haste.

“M. Pavelyn did everything in his power to abridge as much as possible all the legal and religious formalities; for though Rose assured us she would at least live long enough to reach the solemn day, we began to fear death would come upon her by surprise, before her last desire was accomplished.

“Rose on that day wished to be beautiful and gay, as it behooves a bride. With what infantile joy she spoke of the attire which was being prepared for her at Antwerp—of the jewels that were to adorn her arms and neck, and the wreath of orange flowers she would wear upon her brow.

“Poor girl, she was like a living skeleton, and could no longer rise from her arm-chair without assistance. She breathed painfully when taking a little fresh air into her spent lungs; frequently a wheezing cough, a perfect death-rattle, threatened to choke her. It was evident she endured great bodily pain—and yet, would speak with innocent joy about her wedding dress and her bridal wreath!

“Her disease became so aggravated during the last days that preceded our marriage, that her parents and I were convinced, alas! she would never attain the wished-for moment.

“Indeed, for nearly a week she had not been able to leave her bed, her stomach turned against all food, she groaned painfully as if the last struggle with death had begun, and her sleep was ever troubled by night-sweats, that terrible sign that the

soul is wrestling to disengage itself from the shackles of the body.

“What a wretched night it was for me, the one before the solemn day.

“Would Rose die without seeing our union legalized and sanctified by the priest’s blessing?

“Was she to undertake the journey into eternity overcome with sorrow and fear?

“Ah! if Heaven had so willed it, how great would be her agony; for the imperturbable calmness and wonderful courage she had shown both had their source in the hope that buoyed her up, that God would forgive in the wife the weakness of the poor young girl. She was breathing her last breath, her heart had almost ceased beating, the hand of death lay heavy on her heart.

“These thoughts, this anguish, this despair, passed like spectres before my frightened eyes, while in my terrible insomnia I was seated by my bedside watering the floor with tears. The slightest noise made me shudder, and caused inexpressible terror—every moment I thought to hear the steps of the messenger who was coming to tell me—‘She is dead.’

“Finally when the first morning light broke a servant arrived.

“I listened for the words that fell from his lips, as I did not doubt he had come to harrow my heart with the terrible news; but instead of this I gave a wild cry—Rose still lived, she was even better! God in His mercy had permitted that the sun

which was to see our marriage should rise once more for her.

“I dressed hastily for the ceremony, with new courage and firm faith. I also should look well and attired like a happy bridegroom—Rose wished it to be so.

“I had to make haste, for now the day was here there was no further obstacle, and we could not lose a single moment.

“A short time after I was on my way to the chateau, followed by my parents, and ascended into the sick chamber, where our nuptials were to be solemnized.

“There were already a number of persons present, the mayor with his secretary, the priest and his servant, the witnesses and friends.

“Rose was seated in a cushioned chair. As I appeared she smiled upon me with an expression of heavenly beauty, thanking God for according her the favor of triumphing over death until now; but though she tried to draw from me some joyful words, I could not speak, and fixed my eyes upon her in mute admiration.

“I do not know what was going on within me. This bridal dress of dazzling white, emblem of the absence of a material body—this nuptial crown as pure as snow, in which my imagination pictured the nimbus of a saint—those eyes, so hollow and restless that they seemed to gaze at me from eternity’s depths—Rose’s mystical and supernatural beauty at this moment—scattered my senses. It was not

Rose's body which was there before me in the arm-chair ; no, there was nothing terrestrial left, it was her soul, her happy soul, that had come down from the bosom of God to fulfil a tender promise !

“ What must have been the astonishment of the guests ! Rose saw the cause for the confusion of my mind, and was glad to find me so full of faith and hope. While each one made a great effort not to shed tears, and some turned away to hide what they were unable to repress, we smiled at one another, as if Heaven were opening before us, where shone happiness and delight.

“ The voice of the mayor, who had drawn near, holding a document in his hand to read the text of the law, recalled me suddenly from my sweet ecstasy. Rose, to whom my exaltation had given wonderful strength, leant upon her cushions and listened, panting for breath and with dimmed eyes, to the voice of the mayor.

“ At last, when they asked her if she consented to be my wife, the fatal ‘ Yes,’ was pronounced clearly and distinctly ; but then she closed her eyes, and her head slid down, almost in a swoon, on an arm of the chair.

“ Cries of sorrow and of pity resounded through the room ; tears started from every eye, and all flew to the relief of the dying one.

“ The sick-nurse took her in her arms, and placed her on the bed. I tremblingly awaited the announcement of her death. Alas ! we were legitimately married in the eyes of the world ; would

God refuse His blessing to our love? Was it possible poor Rose would descend into the tomb without this last satisfaction?

“ My terror had deceived me. The horizontal position in which she had been placed caused the small amount of blood that circulated through the invalid’s veins to flow back to her heart. She soon opened her eyes, and made a sign to the priest that she was ready to take upon herself in his presence the solemn vows.

“ Without losing time, the minister of God commenced reciting over us the prayers of the church. He joined our hands, made us vow eternal constancy, then in touching accents which resounded in my heart like a voice from heaven :

“ ‘ Be forever blessed,’ he said, ‘ God has inseparably united you !’

“ A cry of triumph broke from Rose ; she drew me to her, embraced me, and said, in this first and last embrace :

“ ‘ My noble friend, my dear husband, I have now lived long enough on earth. I am about to go— God’s voice calls me. I am happy. Farewell! think of me, keep your promise. May hope remain the light of your life until the husband and wife may drink together at the source of never-failing love. Lionel, Lionel, adieu !’

“ She seemed to be convulsed. I drew back, not through fear, but from respect for the solemn mystery of the soul’s flight, which was about to take place.

“Rose made another motion. She took the crucifix which lay on her heart, raised it to her lips, lifted up to Heaven her dying eyes, and then remained immovable.

“While the priest murmured the prayers of the church for the dying, I fixed my eyes on her as in an ecstacy.

“Ah ! how beautiful she was, that sweet angel, whose aureole was a bridal wreath ! How blessedness shone on her smiling features ! What hope, what faith, what elevation towards God in her fixed look !

“I clasped my hands, quivering with respect and admiration. The priest’s voice resounded through the stillness of the room.

“‘Pray,’ he said sadly, ‘pray my children, her soul has taken flight to God.

“All fell upon their knees. I knelt beside the bed, lifting up my hands to the Sovereign Arbiter of human destiny, to thank Him for his infinite bounty.”

THE END.

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